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Adut introduces her brother, Bior

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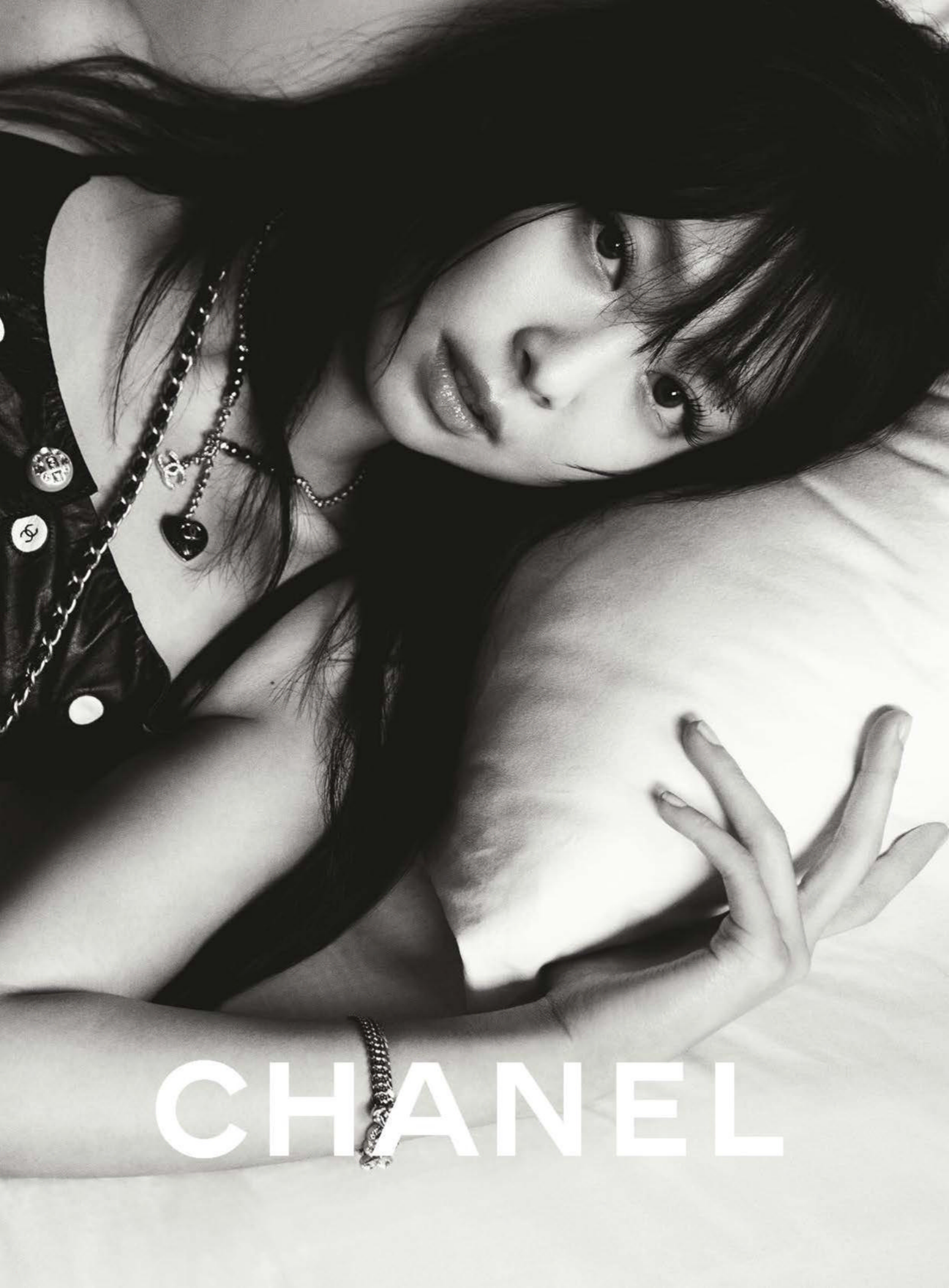
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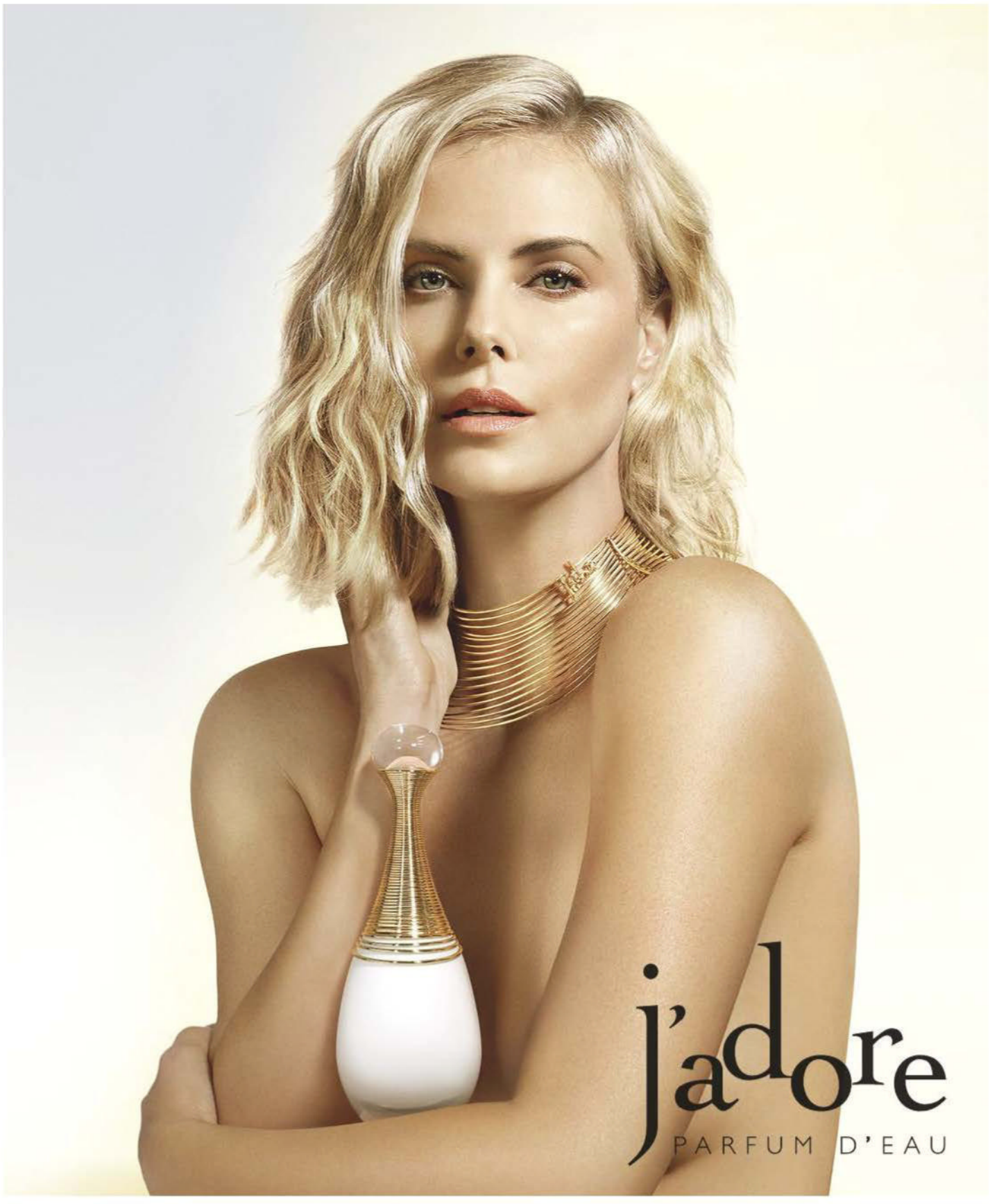

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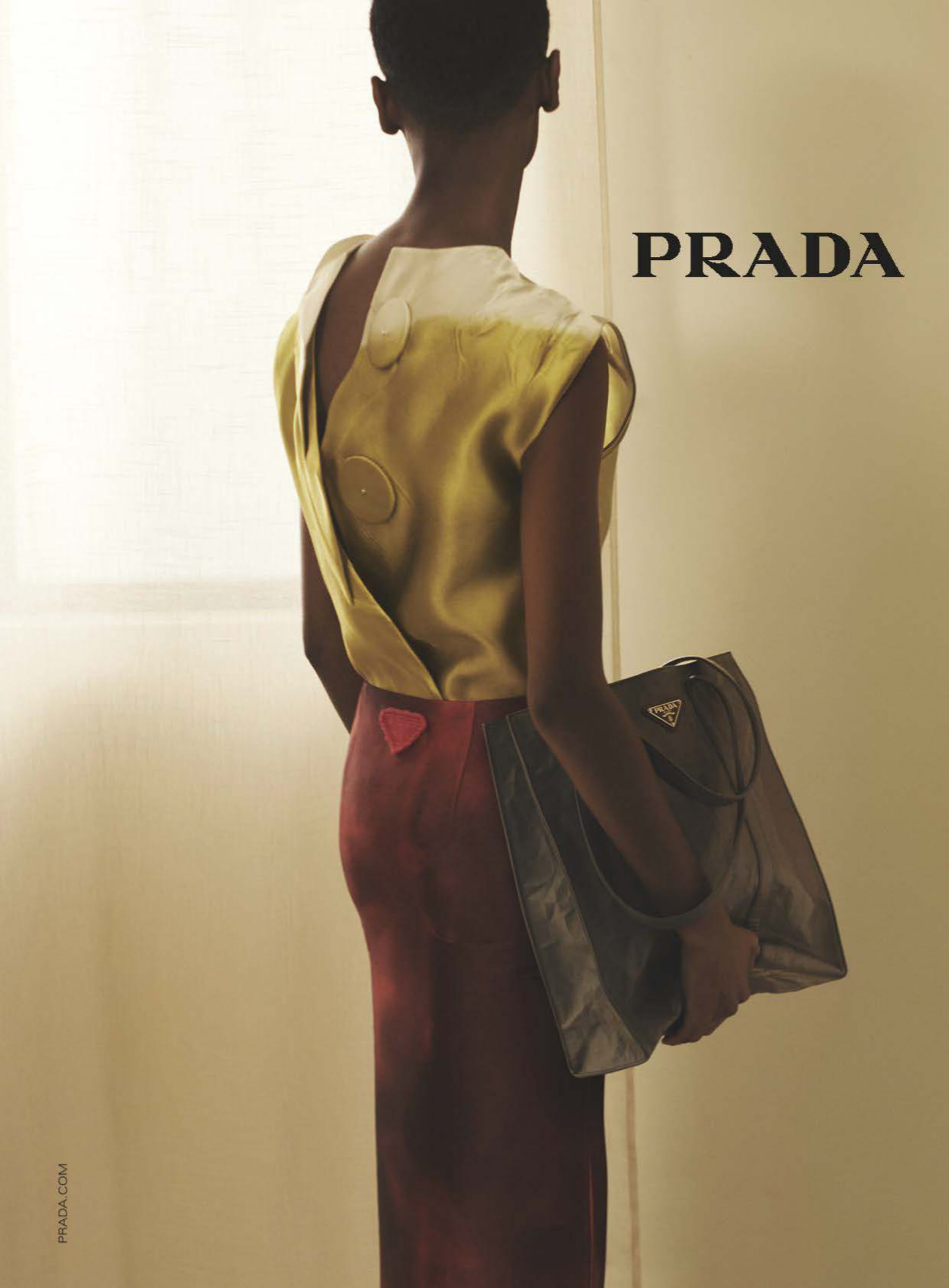
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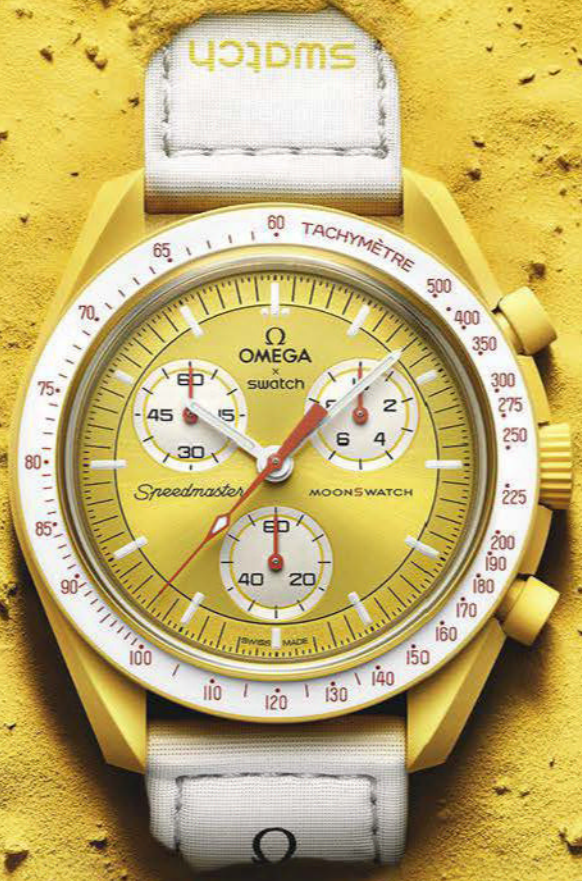

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April 2023
VOGUE AUSTRALIA

Our April issue features three different covers, as seen on this page.

Cover one, above: Adut wears a LOEWE dress and shoes. TIFFANY & CO. earrings. Her own earrings. Bior wears a LOEWE top. ZEGNA pants. VAN CLEEF & ARPELS ring. Make-up by ESTÉE LAUDER starting with Double Wear Stay-In-Place Makeup SPF 10 in 7W1 Deep Spice; on cheeks, Estée Lauder Bronze Goddess Highlighting Powder Gelée in Heatwave; on eyes: Estée Lauder Sumptuous Rebel Length + Lift Mascara; on lips: Estée Lauder Pure Color Revitalizing Crystal Balm in Divine Crystal.

Stylist: Christine Centenera
Photographer: Josh Olins
Hair: Sophie Roberts
Make-up: Kellie Stratton
Manicure: Cindy Vellis
Set design: Sophie Fletcher

Cover two: Adut wears a PRADA dress. TIFFANY & CO. earrings. PASPALEY bracelet. Her own earrings. Bior wears a BURBERRY shirt and pants. PASPALEY earrings and necklace.

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76 Love story
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78 State of dress
With the dress emerging as a symbol of empowered elegance, its story as a continued battleground for womanhood deserves a closer look.

87 Two of us
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110 Keeping Virgil
Shannon Abloh – wife of the late visionary designer Virgil Abloh – talks about securing his legacy.

116 Clean break
Distill, distill, distill – that was the message of the return of an ultra-minimal mien.

Cover three: Adut wears a PRADA dress. TIFFANY & CO. earrings. Her own earrings. Bior wears a LOUIS VUITTON jacket and shorts TIFFANY & CO. bracelet. His own earrings.

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April 2023

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So-called nepo babies are generating chatter and fascination with every move, nowhere more so than in fashion. So what does their ubiquity say about them, but more importantly us?

128 Family album
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156 Fringe colour
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162 Diamond in the rough
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165 Tangerine dream
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Yayoi Kusama

LOUIS VUITTON

Editor's letter

DARREN McDONALD

As I write this, I'm in Europe for the ready-to-wear shows. With so many challenges facing us all right now, fashion is experiencing a soul-searching moment, looking back to look forwards. Dressing up has become more about a quiet elegance, balancing all the excess. It feels right for the times.

Who better to get us through these changing times then than our closest friends and family? This sense of togetherness is at the heart of what we are exploring in this issue.

Our cover star, Adut Akech, is an inspiring woman who has helped pioneer and inspire a growing, powerful group of Australian women finding their voices on and off the runway. We photographed her with Bior, her only brother and a superstar in the making. (See page 87.) Our team travelled to the South Coast of New South Wales with them in search of the raw and beautiful Australian landscape, along with the brilliant British-born, New York-based photographer Josh Olins, who flew in from a trip to New Zealand to work with us. Josh is a unique and thoughtful fashion photographer who captures his subjects with such grace, intelligence and care, which is why he is perfect for *Vogue*.

Shannon Abloh is also part of this issue and someone dear to my heart. She is managing the epic and very real legacy created by Virgil. His loss in 2021 is still hard to bear, but somehow, through the establishment of the Virgil Abloh Securities organisation, Shannon and her family are finding focus, creating a tangible future inspired by all the good things. Shannon and I have been friends for a very long time, so I personally photographed, styled and interviewed her for this issue, which felt like the right thing to do. (See page 110.)

While in Paris, we caught up with Gaia Repossi, creative director of her family's legendary jewellery business and a woman with style and originality. In her story (see page 134), she talks about her family and her responsibilities at the forefront of running their successful business.

I am lucky to have a family who all give each other so much strength, belief and support. Whether it's blood family, a chosen family, or simply good solid friends, we are celebrating all these important bonds. Enjoy the issue.

CHRISTINE CENTENERA Editor-in-chief

Astonishing orange
HERMÈS
PARIS

Astonishing orange

HERMÈS
PARIS

BRIDES de GALA
Hermès

Contributors

It's not often sibling models cover an issue of *Vogue* Australia, which is why our creative team sought to celebrate the natural bond and big-sister energy between Adut Akech and her younger brother, Bior, for our special shoot.

JOSH OLINS

Photographer Josh Olins, who is usually based in New York, was travelling solo in New Zealand when he was asked to shoot model Adut Akech and her brother, Bior, among the rolling hills of Gerringong in New South Wales. "It can be daunting for any creative," Olins says of working alongside an unfamiliar group of people, "so, it was truly a great experience to put my trust in a new team." For this issue, which marked Bior's cover debut, the photographer called upon memories of his own childhood to evoke a sense of familial affinity. "[Adut] was very nurturing and guided him with her on-set experience. I decided to hone in on this and try to capture the intimacy and connection between them, which I feel resulted in emotional images that truly represented their relationship and her intention to prepare him for his life ahead."

SOPHIE FLETCHER

After exploring the outdoor location of the shoot with photographer Josh Olins, Sophie Fletcher set about designing and sourcing a number of pieces that would tell the story of Bior and Adut's innate bond, while also highlighting the designs Christine Centenera had styled them in. "There was a sense of adventure and whimsy that we enhanced by creating scenarios of play, and then in contrast, moments of calm and reflection," says the set designer. The significance of the shoot, against backdrop of Gerringong's grasslands, was not lost on Fletcher, who shares: "We knew we were capturing a very tender and special moment in Adut and Bior's relationship, with Bior on the precipice of his career and his extremely successful sister guiding him."

KELLIE STRATTON

Make-up artist Kellie Stratton tapped into Adut's love of beauty looks, together with the sentimental family theme of the issue for a cover that introduced Bior to the world. "I have worked with Adut on many occasions," Stratton says. "She loves make-up and skincare and always has input when creating the look. We have fun." Reflecting on the day, Stratton says: "A major highlight for me was working with Josh. The beautiful connection he captured between Adut and Bior was magical and timeless. The images will definitely be remembered for a long time to come."

SOPHIE ROBERTS

For Australian hair stylist Sophie Roberts, input from Adut and Bior on the direction of their look proved crucial to the cover's celebration of connection. "It was important that they felt central to the creative narrative," explains Roberts. Drawing inspiration from both the picturesque landscape and the bold spring/summer '23 looks worn by the pair, Roberts aimed to create a powerful silhouette via the use of braids and twists. "The sentiment on set was emotional and exciting from start to finish," says the hair stylist, who has long admired Adut's agency in her self-expression. "I feel so proud to have been part of the whole team who were involved in making such incredible imagery."

WORDS: ANGELICA XIDIAS PHOTOGRAPH: (FLETCHER) RENÉ VAILE

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The crew and sibling cover stars on location on the South Coast of New South Wales.

Natural instinct

A sense of kinship reigned as supermodel Adut, back on home soil, guided her younger brother in his first cover shoot set in a dramatic coastal locale.

The easy familiarity and natural kinship between South Sudanese-Australian model Adut and her younger brother, Bior Akech, is one that *Vogue* Australia had the honour of capturing for the cover of this family-focused issue.

On location among the grasslands of Gerringong, a coastal town two hours south of Sydney, the 23-year-old international model guided her 17-year-old sibling through his cover debut.

For junior fashion and market editor Harriet Crawford, the pair's closeness was obvious in their body language. "There was a playful sibling dynamic between them, which really came across in the imagery," says Crawford, who adds that the two also fulfilled editor-in-chief Christine Centenera's creative vision on the shoot. "They both gave us gold," she reveals. "Adut, being so seasoned, was able to direct Bior, knowing what the camera needed."

Acting fashion and market editor Miguel Urbina Tan, who recalls helping Crawford assist Adut in manoeuvring through a field wearing a scene-stealing white dress from Loewe's spring/summer '23 collection, adds: "The way the styling was approached had a sort of nuanced edit where the fashion on Adut and Bior spoke to each other," he says. "Once they were in front of the camera, they really personified that message in the way they interacted. It is Bior's first time being shot for a cover, so in a way Adut is guiding Bior into what I imagine to be a very successful career in modelling."

WORDS: ANGELICA XIDIAS
PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTINE CENTENERA AND RIKKI KEENE

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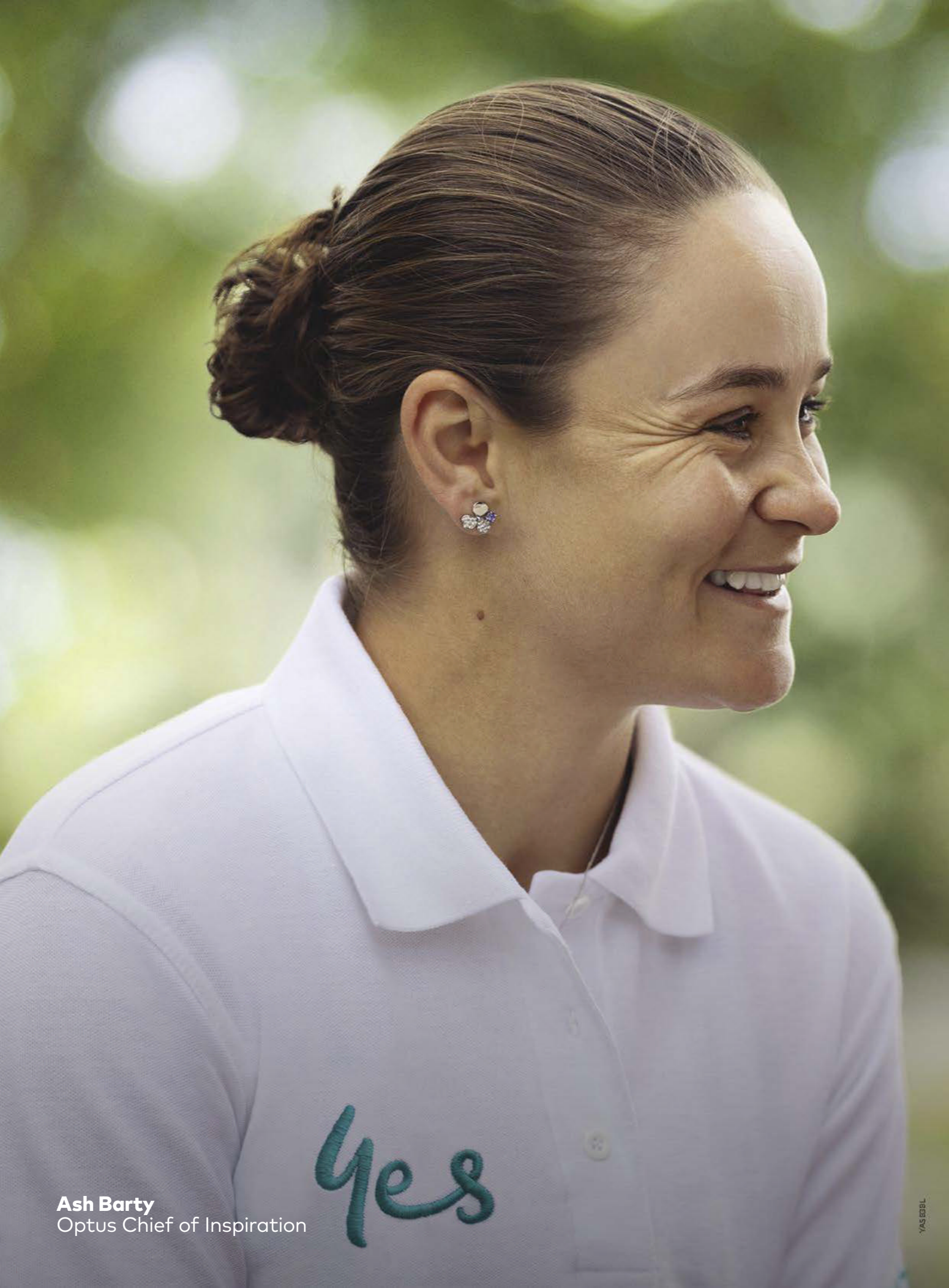

Ash Barty
Optus Chief of Inspiration

It starts
with yes
A year ago, I said 'yes' to retiring from tennis to pursue other dreams. And I haven't looked back. I hope my journey can help inspire others to say 'yes' to their dreams and ambitions too.
Yes
OPTUS
YAS83BR

The archetypes

Core pieces have been reinvented and are reborn. Welcome back uniform dressing: clothing with integrity, simplicity and alive with a contemporary spirit.

STYLING MIGUEL URBINA TAN PHOTOGRAPHS JAMIE HEATH

Shirt shifting

The future of shirting lies in shapes that deconstruct the classic button-up. Take Loewe's version, which ties at the back for added sensuality.

LOEWE top, $1,850.
FRAME pants, $1,935.

WORDS: JONAH WATERHOUSE HAIR: RORY RICE MAKE-UP: NISHA VAN BERKEL
MANICURE: JESSICA DIEZ MODEL: ABIGAYL ANDERSON
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School's in

Black leather Mary Janes are enjoying an adult revival, featuring height and verve that would have broken school dress codes, except for their high-shine finish.

Scan the QR code to shop *Vogue*'s edit of the best of the trend.

Clockwise from top: TIFFANY & CO. ring, $3,300, and bracelet, $4,700. ROGER VIVIER shoes, $2,290; TIFFANY & CO. ring, $9,750. CHANEL shoes, $3,400, from the Chanel boutiques; CHRISTIAN DIOR shoes, $1,850; PRADA shoes, $1,940.

Intimate encounter

The power of the subtle reveal is emphasised through lace details and visible slithers of lingerie, injecting an after-hours edge into minimalist daywear.

Left: GUCCI dress, $6,300. CAMILLA AND MARC bodysuit, worn underneath, $450. BULGARI ring, $3,160.
Top: SIR top, $420, and bra, $220.
Above: CHRISTOPHER ESBER dress, $995. BULGARI earrings, $15,100.

Scan the QR code to shop *Vogue*'s edit of the best of the trend.

BOTTEGA VENETA jacket, $3,990, and bag, $7,150. DION LEE pants, $870. CARTIER bracelet, $8,050 and ring, $3,600.
Scan the QR code to shop *Vogue*'s edit of the best black blazers.

JAMIE HEATH
ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

Perfectly suited

The standout suiting from spring/summer '23 had at its heart traditional codes and considered construction, with subtle idiosyncratic twists like collarless blazers.

Fringe matters

All aspects of the wardrobe were worked over with a layer of light-as-air feathers this season that levitated off surfaces and gave everyday fabrics an aura of elegance.

CHANEL jacket, $34,830, earrings, $2,770, and bag, $9,640, from the Chanel boutiques.

JAMIE HEATH
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Butterfly effect

Now more than ever, fashion is about clothes that are tremendous, genius and for keeps. Haute couture spring/summer '23 was all that. From the big guns to smaller salons, this is a season cut with a tailored edge and bursting with ideas that will fly. By Alison Veness.

Chanel – the joy

At Chanel, French artist Xavier Veilhan created a captivating *mise-en-scène* with giant wood and paper mobile animals – an elephant, horse, deer, bird, buffalo, and lion – gliding forth one by one to join a *croco-chien* (croco-dog) and camel on stage. With the scene set, models emerged Helen of Troy-like from within the creatures' Trojan depths. This was a Virginie Viard couture moment with escapism and joy at its heart and an infinitesimal beading of animals running through the collection; a corgi appeared on the front of a jacket, and birds fluttered across a wedding veil. Inspiration came direct from Gabrielle Chanel's apartment at 31 rue Cambon, which features an abundance of animal motifs.

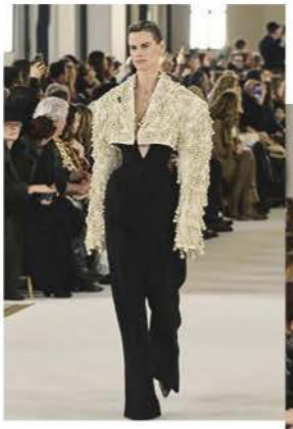
All looks from Chanel haute couture spring/summer '23.

GETTY IMAGES, GORUNWAY.COM

All looks from Schiaparelli haute couture spring/summer '23.

Schiaparelli – the fantasy

Major internet moment alert: no animals were harmed in the making of the lion, wolf and leopard. They were, in fact, faux taxidermy, made from foam, resin and fabric. The beasts were straight out of Dante's *Inferno*, but beyond the "animal kingdom" headlines and debates about big-game hunting, the collection was an impeccable lesson in couture craftsmanship. With a sleight of (surreal) Schiaparelli hand, tin sequins were covered in leather, and baubles made from wood. The fantasy was grounded in sculpted velvet gowns, slip dresses and sharp tuxedo pants in wool crepe, all of which were the real "meat" of the collection.



Fendi – the evening

Here, the perfect storm of grace and elegance. And if this show were to be defined by a decade, it was the 1990s and those wispy draped slips – that Kate Moss time, which also recalled the languorous gowns of the 1930s. Kim Jones loves this era. He is fascinated by the Bloomsbury Group and their creative hub Charleston, and is successfully adding these whispers to the house of Fendi, which four years after the passing of Karl Lagerfeld continues to build on lightness. These were dresses that appeared to be made of lace, but on close inspection were meticulously woven from silvery leather. Lacy leather. This was our kind of evening, all day long.

All looks from Fendi haute couture spring/summer '23.

GETTY IMAGES, GORUNWAY.COM

All looks from Jean Paul Gaultier haute couture spring/summer '23.

Jean Paul Gaultier – the moment

How to transcend Gaultier's amazing past – the legacy of the conical bra, the kilt, the Breton blue and white stripes? Haider Ackermann had the answer: dial it up into the stratosphere of desire. Over the past few seasons, the label's couture has been created by guest designers "for one season only" – and for spring/summer '23 it was the turn of Ackermann, who spectacularly distilled all wardrobe desire into what he has always done best: good tailoring. Combined with the attitude that comes from the Gaultier legacy, this collection anointed Ackermann as The One. Razor-sharp shapes coupled with exquisite detail – a rim of rhinestones, an oversized bow at the hip, raw silk organza edging on a jacket, feathers frothing from necklines, and that bra … discs in silk satin worn with slim pants and spindly heels. This show is the blueprint for now.

All looks from Christian Dior haute couture spring/summer '23.

Christian Dior – the heart

And all that jazz. The Christian Dior collection had all the easy purring power of a late-night set starting somewhere in Paris in the 1920s. Inspired by Josephine Baker, dresses shimmied and shone but had a modern dazzle. In post-war Paris, Baker wore Dior on stage, a fact referenced in a neat sense of tailoring that echoed this era, with beautiful suits and coats grazing just above the ankles. The show's stage design, in collaboration with artist Mickalene Thomas, featured soaring collages of iconic and pioneering Black women: Eartha Kitt, Nina Simone, Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge and more – a line-up of impressive entertainers, actors, TV stars and activists gazing back at the audience. The take away: Maria Grazia continues to express her creativity with a heartfelt belief in women, which we applaud.

Robert Wun – the debut

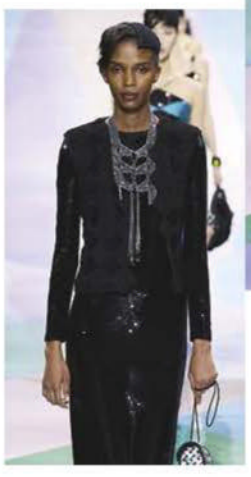
Paris, in many ways, was a natural progression for Hong Kong-born-and-raised Robert Wun, who won the prestigious 2022 ANDAM Special Prize. For his haute couture debut, Wun explored the concept of "fear" with looks that wowed including a coat covered in raindrops with a matching umbrella, and a bride in scorched satin. Though this was Wun's first couture show in Paris, his London-based business has been going for nine years and he's been making one-off pieces from his design studio, dressing the likes of Lady Gaga and Cardi B, among others. Wun brought some British magic. And was fear*less*.

All looks from Robert Wun haute couture spring/summer '23.

All looks from Armani Privé haute couture spring/summer '23.

Armani Privé – the history

A parade of the harlequinade. The *commedia dell'arte* was celebrated with diamond patterns, cheeky Pierrot ruffs, dance dress rosettes, lush caviar beads and a blizzard of blindingly sparkly sequins. Mr. Armani loves performance, film and theatre, and the collection's red-carpet gowns and slender suits bedazzled. Privé is constructed by his Milanese atelier, an incredible cast of craftspeople he has flown in every season to join him fitting and working on all the looks up right up until the first exit. There were 77 exits, not quite one for every year of his life, but it was an impressive reminder that he is strong.



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60 THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

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Line of vision

Hermès's clever new platform sandals give the illusion of walking on air through underfoot geometry resembling sleek architectural apertures.

ART DIRECTION ARQUETTE COOKE **STYLING** MIGUEL URBINA TAN
PHOTOGRAPH ANNA POGOSSOVA

HERMÈS
sandals, $5,395.

WORDS: JONAH WATERHOUSE
ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

New directions

Carla Zampatti had one lesson for her daughter Bianca Spender when it came to business: work hard. As the designer celebrates 15 years since the launch of her label, she reflects on what it meant to forge her own path.

STYLING HARRIET CRAWFORD PHOTOGRAPH ROB TENNENT

Mum was an incredibly inspiring woman, but it was more about what she did than what she said. She never had an opinion about what I should do in life, just that I should work hard and be passionate about what I did. She led by example. That was the school of Mum.

She had a lot of joy in work; she wanted us to find the joy and passion in working hard. When I talked about fashion, she was like, "Well, you better be passionate … It's tough." I knew it, and I didn't go in with any sense of 'You'll be in the family business.' She was a realist. She knew what it took to survive in fashion.

I was always experimental with clothes and had a very distinctive sense of style. The whole time I'd been at uni studying commerce, I was working in Mum's business. I was allowed in the design room because I was good at cutting; I'm very precise. There were two amazing drapers, they would get a roll of fabric and a mannequin and start that way. It wasn't a drawing, you weren't trying to emulate something. You were reacting to the fabric, and whether it was falling on the bias or playing with the drape or twisting and turning and then making these cuts. Very quickly I learned that was my love. There's something about seeing how things unfold on the fabric and the body.

After two years, I was coming up with ideas that I didn't have the craft to render. I had learned in Mum's office, but I also knew I had, in a way, learned as much as I could there and I wanted to go to the heart of draping, so I moved overseas. France is where draping was born, whether it was Balenciaga, Givenchy, Vionnet. I worked for Martine Sitbon for three and a half years. I feel so incredibly lucky to have been part of that environment. The only rule was that you had to push your creativity as hard as you could. My mum ran a business that had an incredible sense of style and design, but she was very astute in her business and Martine was the opposite. I remember saying, "I think that might be a bit complicated for the makers and it's going to become very expensive." She said: "We dream first. And then we work out how to make it happen."

September 11 hit and it decimated the fashion industry in Paris. I was looking for new avenues and was thinking of moving to London. Over the years I'd been away, Mum had tried three designers and they hadn't worked out. She said, "Why will you give everyone a go except me? Let me interview you." We both had a very clear agreement. One season, three months, a collection of 20 pieces. If it sold, I stayed. If it didn't, I left. And it sold. Well, half of it sold really well and half of it sold terribly, but there was enough to show that there was an opportunity.

I'd always avoided the limelight and wanted to avoid a comparison to Mum. We always believed in quality, we always loved beauty, we were always interested in ideas of timelessness, but how we defined our look was so different. My mum was the epitome of the power suit and I was always a romantic. Our natural difference was our strength. Because she really had her signature and when I did my elements in her collection they never competed with hers. They just had a different sensibility, another layer that was offered to the customers.

Soon, we realised it had started branching out into its own world. This was the moment where it needed to stand on its own two feet. People always say to me: "What was it like to break away from your mum?" We didn't have a fight; it was a natural evolution. The thing Mum taught me in her actions was to be fiercely independent and not be afraid to say what you needed to say. My first presentation, after I separated from Mum, was the most hyper-romantic, otherworldly space; everything was swathes of incredible draping. Mum was primary and black and white. I was tertiary. Mum was fabrics that had a flatness and a modernity to them – mine always had textures. Mum was a very clean and graphic line. I always had this organic, wabi-sabi kind of movement. Being able to have a space where I could amplify and flourish with all of these details was really exciting.

Hitting the 15-year milestone as a business is about seeing the body of work that I've created. There's a part of me that never knew if I would make it to this point. I'm very humble about what it takes to be a creative. Every collection has a really deep narrative and a sense of something I'm trying to evoke. My most recent collection was all about this idea of courage and disrupted beauty. After Mum passed away, I really wanted to embody courage for women. Those are very felt senses and ephemeral ideas, they don't look like a puffed sleeve or a graphic line. They're not a mood board that you can just google. They're me reacting to our universe and what we're all living through and trying to communicate that as an artist, as a creative, through clothes.

Mum grew up at a time where women had to be men to be in the business arena. They were incredible trailblazers and the clothes that they needed to achieve that were strong and powerful. I think for my generation, empowerment is more about freedom. My clothes have always been about that, in the way they move around you, in the way they will be a little surprising, whether it's a tailored jacket that's got a gather through it, or a romantic dress with a little harness piece. Women are so layered, we have so many different parts of us. We are partners, we are friends, we are daughters, we are mothers, we are leaders, we are intuitive feelers.

INTERVIEW: HANNAH-ROSE YEE HAIR: RORY RICE MAKE-UP: CHERRY CHEUNG ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

“Hitting the 15-year milestone is about seeing the body of work I’ve created There’s a part of me that never knew if I would make it”

Bianca Spender wears a BIANCA SPENDER jacket, $795, top, $395, and skirt, $445. Tiffany & Co. rings, on right hand, $1,850, and $3,350. Gucci shoes, $2,135. Her own ring.

Designers and sisters Deanna and Laura Fanning.

Pieces from Kiko Kostadinov's recent womenswear collections.

OTHER IMAGES: ADAM KATZ SINDING

The luminaries

The second instalment of *Vogue* Vanguard, an ongoing series, celebrates the game-changers and innovators breaking ground in our most creative fields. This time, two Australian sisters leading a British label light the way.

WORDS ALICE BIRRELL AND JONAH WATERHOUSE

Laura and Deanna Fanning

If you've heard of British label Kiko Kostadinov, it's likely owing to one of the brand's cult items. The baguette-shaped Trivia bag consistently sells out (and fetches up to double its market price on resale websites) while a collaboration with Heaven by Marc Jacobs in early 2023 caused an online frenzy. This level of traction could also be from the many eye-catching hues the designers, sisters from Australia, regularly call upon.

"Not to sound too intellectual, but the psychology of colour is really loaded," 32-year-old designer Laura Fanning says. "[In Australia], the way you're predisposed to colour is actually quite different to Europe because of the way people wear things, the way they incorporate graphics."

"Even clothes for the beach," Deanna, her twin sister, picks up. "In the 90s and 2000s, beachwear was very colourful, even now."

The two are accustomed to finding inspiration in the past and making something new. Raised in Melbourne, they often stayed with their grandmother who made wedding dresses and owned hundreds of copies of *Vogue*, which the sisters pored over. After high school, they attempted non-creative pursuits – law for Deanna, psychology for Laura – but dropped out to pursue fashion, moving to London in 2012 and 2015 respectively. Deanna studied knitwear at Central Saint Martins, and Laura later joined her for a womenswear master's degree. They decided to work together before meeting Kiko Kostadinov, a student creating menswear whose work they resonated with. Before long, they were heading up the womenswear for his eponymous brand (he still helms men's) and have just shown in Paris for the second time.

Despite their global journey, shades of coastal Australiana are visible in the designers' spring/summer '23 collection, which featured body-clinging nylon in colour combinations reminiscent of surf-label rash vests. Their playful approach to glamour has made Kiko a favourite for It-girls including Iris Law (who owns a green glitter Trivia), while Dua Lipa and Bella Hadid favour the brand's preppy checks. The pieces encourage self-expression and steer clear of uniformity.

"I think a lot of emerging designers get stuck focusing on one product; maybe they don't look into other areas of the collection they can commercialise," Deanna says, hinting at a business acumen the siblings share. "We've been slowly building a bags business, and concentrating on footwear."

Both Laura and Deanna hope collaborating with different brands, such as Asics in 2019, will push their brand to different customers. "We're relatively unknown in the global fashion scene, so we're always thinking, 'How can we put the Kiko name for womenswear in peoples' minds?'" Deanna says.

"Collaborations are so hype-driven and that can sometimes feel like a lot of pressure, but you have to think of it as an amazing opportunity to learn something," adds Laura.

As for the future, the sisters aim to build on the network of key pieces they've created, updating the cult Trivia bag as a priority. "Autumn/winter '23/'24 is the first time we're thinking, if we had the bag that was a wallet, what would that look like? " Deanna says. Like the rest of their work, the Fannings want their customers to wear the pieces their own way. "I hope people can pick it up and it resonates with them." *Jonah Waterhouse*

→

Julia Baldini

Clues that Julia Baldini was destined to become a shoemaker started early. First was as a fascination with fairytales that had a footwear focus (Cinderella's glass slippers, Dorothy's glittering pumps, the old woman who lived in a shoe), then came her first email account at age 11. "It was shooz100@hotmail.com," she says. "My best friend's nickname for me has been 'Shooz' since."

Now, at 30, Baldini is five years into a career as a locally trained cordwainer adopting time-honoured craftsmanship while clearing the cobwebs on any fusty connotations of the craft – a tough ask in a country with dwindling local shoemakers. As head shoe designer at fellow emerging label Iordanes Spyridon Gogos, she focuses on innovation, using unconventional machinery and fabrics sourced from antique markets and auction houses to produce her offbeat aesthetic she describes as "a remix of historical footwear and 21st century underground style tribes".

And though her pieces carry a fairytale feel with a twist, from folky "trolley dolly" clogs crafted from an old Spanish angora jumper to spiked ballet slippers that look plucked from a Tim Burton film, she's grounded in making with purpose. "I need to have a strong grasp of why something needs to be birthed into the 4D," she explains. She asks herself how her creations can add value to the world, using a mental check box that they mustn't look like anything else on offer.

Happily, that much is true of her chunky fabric wedges in a lysergic colour palette and lace-up knee-high boots in denim, each with their own personality the wearer can tap into. "I love how shoes can completely alter a person's sense of self and how they relate to the world around them," she says. *Alice Birrell*

Julia Baldini.

Looks from Julia Baldini, including her collaboration with local designer Jordan Gogos.

Shaun Edwards, founder of House of Darwin, and the label's creations in collaboration with Wah Wah.

Shaun Edwards

"Creativity can distil even the most complex of issues," says Shaun Edwards founder of Northern Territory-based three-year-old label House of Darwin. Using illustrations that channel a nostalgia for souvenir prints, Edwards reframes Australiana to foreground Indigenous stories. Take a T-shirt with Katherine Gorge crossed out, replaced by its traditional place name Nitmiluk, or slogans like "You are on Larrakia land" and "Respect your Elders". "I believe House of Darwin can be a subtle and accessible portal into the depth of the Northern Territory, which is home to thriving examples of the oldest continuous cultures on the planet," Edwards says.

Growing up in West Arnhem Land's Gunbalanya, the Larrakia man traced a path into professional football, before moving to LA, and eventually returning to the Territory feeling a pull to give back. The brand's profits now go into projects aimed to empower Indigenous communities such as refurbishing basketball courts, running skate workshops and generating art grants.

His understanding that creativity can have impact came as a child, catching a freshwater turtle whose shell was then repainted by a local artist. "It [showed] me that creativity can bring to life new perspectives."

A recent collaboration with cult knitwear label Wah Wah is the next step in Edwards reshaping the perception of Australians abroad as mostly blond surfers. "I'm seeing a new energy of creatives rising up around Australia telling their story in their own voice, which is exciting." *AB*

PORTRAITS: NATHAN ANGELIS, RYAN BRABAZON, THOMAS DILLON, EVE PEDDER IMAGES (COLLECTION): ZARNI TUN

Pieces from Pedder's collection Handle With Care.

Ruby Pedder with her creations.

Ruby Pedder

What would happen if you combined the wearability of ready-to-wear with craftsmanship that channels couture, and imbued it with the spirit of modern punk? You'd land on the work of Ruby Pedder, the Australian designer fashioning for a new generation of rebels. Inspired by Vivienne Westwood and riot grrrls, the feminist movement that originated in American punk circles in the early 90s, Pedder takes cues from past subcultures to design for tomorrow's rulebreakers.

"It wasn't until my late teens that I realised fashion was the artistic endeavour I wished to pursue in life," Pedder says. "It encapsulated creativity and innovation, and celebrates diversity in people, thoughts and practices."

The clothes evoke the spirit of ravewear in an artisanal way. Wide-leg ruched pants are becoming a signature, as are unexpected combinations of pattern and materiality. "At the core of my work is an innate investment in slow production methods," she says. "It is my goal to inspire a higher level of respect in the treatment of clothes."

In 2023, Pedder will show for the first time at Australian fashion week as part of the Next Gen presentation. Like punk musicians, her creativity comes from chaos. "I am well and truly in the flow; my room and workspaces are a disaster. It's very exciting." *JW*

A range of pieces by Li from her collections Felt, dress and Le Forme.

Michelle Li.

Michelle Li

What Michelle Li's work lacks in colour – her output is rooted in soberly elegant blacks and charcoals – it makes up for in textural richness, which stems from a deeply considered design approach.

"The foundation of my work always comes from a place of love," says the emerging designer, who was raised in Beijing before moving to Australia. "I hope to expand ways of thinking and invite beautiful experiences into everyday life through design."

Li's garments, honed through a fashion master's degree at RMIT, take core wardrobe items and turn them into objects of sculptural beauty. Trench coats are fashioned from felt and made structural through sharp, pointed shoulders and sleek boning. Others feature reversed hems or an absence of sleeves, and bumster-style skirts that float off the waist. Her unique approach won her the Australian Fashion Foundation's 2021 scholarship and continues to add new meaning to well-trodden wardrobe staples; she notes the word "felt" can be understood as a noun or a verb, encouraging tactility instead of creating art that's purposefully out of reach.

"Like putting a flower petal in a friend's book," Li ponders aloud, "how do you write poetry with a piece of clothing?" *JW*

Minhee Jo

"When I was younger, I used to buy second-hand pieces and alter them to reimagine the silhouette and mood," remembers Melbourne-based designer and founder of Aaizél, Minhee Jo. Small in stature ("I'm quite short"), she would rework them to fit her body, a latent practice that's metamorphosed into an unmistakable design signature seven years into her label.

A box-pleat mini, spliced with a V-shaped waistline, liquid column dresses with diagonal incursions of block colour and deconstructed shirting, cropped, split and refashioned are typical of her experimental spirit that blends fluid and strict. "I love juxtaposing contrasting elements to create harmony," she observes.

Jo's starting point is material, and a personal preoccupation with sustainable practice means she favours deadstock and natural fibres, and local workshops, something that saw her championed by Net-A-Porter's sustainability platform. "I need to see and feel the fabrics I may potentially be working with," she notes.

All this is to say there's nothing pedestrian about her pieces; a base of biscuits, black and creams are electrified each season by a well-chosen suite of high-saturation colours. Of late: aquamarine, bubblegum and tangerine. A "brave mix", as Jo puts it. *AB*

Looks from Aaizél.

Minhee Jo.

Crookes's signature shoes in stretch fabrications.

Amy Crookes.

PORTRAIT: TOM McEVOY IMAGES: HECTOR CLARK

Amy Crookes

The theatrical leanings of Amy Crookes's second-skin boots in painterly prints give nothing away of her beginnings in an Australian beachside city. There, in Wollongong, few talked about fashion. "I watched Fashion TV after school but felt like an outsider," she recalls of the channel. Today, the 28-year-old has decamped to Paris after studying fashion at Parsons School of Design in New York.

Launched in 2018, it is her shoes, variably in block colour, stripes and floral prints – the latter she paints herself inspired by the figurative brushstrokes and harmonious palettes of Les Nabis artists Édouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard – that have garnered a loyal following. They were, though, a happy accident. "I needed shoes for the runway," she remembers of debuting her masters collection as a graduate. "I wanted a continuation of the collection so used a stretchy fabrication I developed for the clothing."

She's been experimenting ever since with shirred materials that mould to the leg – sometimes in high stocking-like *cuissardes*. "I love the simplicity of slipping something on," she says, a fit she achieves by pinning on herself using fabrics. The effect? In her words: "Overtly feminine, romantic, sensual, delicate, naïve". *AB*

Abiding values

After more than five decades at the very top, and with a new Australian flagship, Ralph Lauren is still flying the red, white and blue for the American dream, and the family business. By Sarah Harris.

The high-rise head office of Ralph Lauren on Manhattan's Madison Avenue – a great big tower of glass and steel jutting skywards – doesn't immediately tally with, well, Ralph Lauren. Until, that is, the lift doors open on to the sixth floor and you're enveloped by what looks like a Ralph Lauren flagship store – all cosy and low-lit with wood-panelled walls, moody oil paintings, and love-worn leather sofas scattered with plaid cushions. They've even built a sweeping mahogany staircase into this modern skyscraper, to connect his design teams across its multiple floors.

Along a wide corridor is Ralph Lauren's office, cluttered with curios. Books are piled high on every surface; framed artworks, magazine covers and awards line the floor, propped up against all four walls. Look up, and there are two 1950s plane models, which swoop above a vintage-looking shiny black bicycle (a gift, never ridden). Silver-framed photographs of his impossibly good-looking family – his wife, Ricky, three children, Andrew, David and daughter Dylan, and five grandchildren – cover the desk, along with other knick-knacks. A space no bigger than a dinner plate is left bare (probably not for Lauren to actually have lunch here, because why would you when you have your own Polo Bar restaurant a few blocks away and the promise of Ralph's filet mignon).

"Hello," he says welcomingly, walking over to greet me. Charismatic and softly spoken, he's slim (he works out with a personal trainer for 90 minutes every morning) and wears distressed bleached blue jeans, shirt and tartan blazer and box-fresh white sneakers; his aquamarine eyes are all the more twinkling against his tanned, lined skin. He just returned from Los Angeles, where he presented his spring/summer '23 collection – remarkably, it was the first time he has staged a show on the West Coast – attended by Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck, John Legend, Laura Dern and Diane Keaton (a friend since the 1970s, when he dressed her for her role in *Annie Hall*).

As ever, the collection had all the touchpoints of classic American style with a hint of Englishness: cowboy boots worn with flirty prairie dresses, rugged Navajo-style blanket skirts, preppy sweaters with crisp white tennis shorts, tailoring and Old Hollywood glamour by way of sinuous evening gowns. "The reason it works, and still works, is because I am who I am. I am the product," he says. "If you like my style, you will like my clothes."

Here's the truth: it isn't, and has never been, about fashion. Lauren has always been more interested in lifestyle, in the life *lived* in the clothes, which has undoubtedly added to the sum of his success over the years. He urges you to dream. When you buy a Ralph Lauren sweater you're not only buying a sweater, you're buying into a world of refinement and good taste, of chiselled jawlines and flawless skin, where everyone owns a horse and a sports car – and yet somehow it all manages to look terribly attainable.

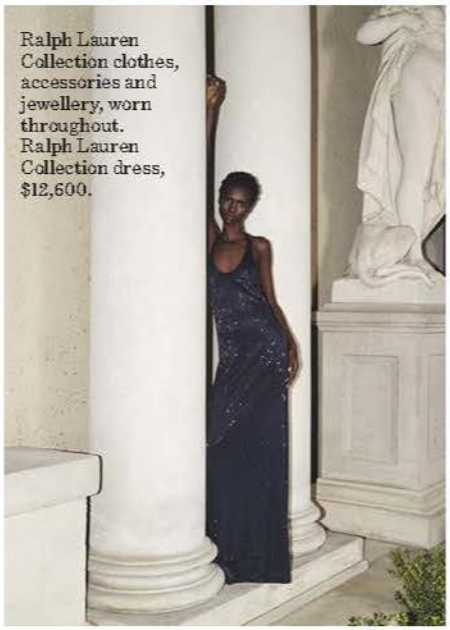
To that end, he has always worked more like a film director than a designer. "I'm not Karl Lagerfeld," he acknowledges. "Karl was a designer and he was unique, but I don't see myself as that. I see myself as …" he pauses, "a cool guy."

Today, Ralph Lauren Corporation is worth more than $7.4 billion, and although he stepped down as CEO in 2015, he remains executive chairman and chief creative officer and presides over every line: Ralph Lauren Collection, Polo Ralph Lauren, Purple Label, Double RL and more. There are 1,246 directly run Ralph Lauren stores and concessions globally – one of the most recent a brand-new Australian flagship on the corner of Sydney's Pitt and King streets; 700 square metres spread over four floors and replete with private rooftop. Add to that empire, his five restaurants and numerous coffee shops. "It's mine, and it's something I built. I'm proud of it because I built it with integrity and taste, but one doesn't really feel everything that you'd think you would feel. I've always worked hard, I don't rest on my laurels."

There is very little Ralph Lauren, 83, hasn't seen or done; Audrey Hepburn, a film-star heroine of his childhood, has handed him a CFDA lifetime achievement award, he's hung out with Cary Grant, and he's given advice to Frank Sinatra. "It starts with being who you want to be when you're growing up. I wasn't wealthy – not poor, but not wealthy – I dreamt like everyone else about a life that was good. I wanted a house in the country, I wanted a racing car; they were boyhood dreams that I turned into a reality." →

Ralph Lauren and his wife, Ricky, with their children from left, Andrew, Dylan and David, outside their East Hampton home in 1977. And below, other images of the family on their property.

GETTY IMAGES



Ralph Lauren Collection clothes, accessories and jewellery, worn throughout. Ralph Lauren Collection dress, $12,600.

From left: Ralph Lauren Collection dress, $4,600, and shoes, $1,500; jumpsuit, $4,700, belt, $1,100, and shoes, $1,100.

From left: Ralph Lauren Collection bodysuit, $1,100, and skirt, $4,600; dress, P.O.A.; bodysuit, $1,100, skirt, $4,600, and shoes, $1,100.

Born Ralph Lifshitz in 1939 (he changed to "Lauren" after Lauren Bacall when he was 16 years old), he was the youngest son of Jewish immigrants. His father was an artist, but more often would make ends meet painting houses. "When I was growing up I loved John F Kennedy, people that stood out to me as being special. They inspired me to be something more." He wasn't a top-grade student and he wasn't particularly interested in fashion (he didn't go to a fashion school). Success is something he always recognised and that deeply resonated with him even at a young age, growing up in the Bronx.

His passion was films, and the starry appeal of leading men such as Steve McQueen and Paul Newman: "I always liked the kind of actors who would wear my clothes." It's why there is always a narrative to Ralph Lauren: he's a storyteller who conjures the kind of optimistic world that the world wants to live, to *belong*, in.

He has spent his five-decade-plus career as master purveyor of the American Dream but he's also the embodiment of it: an aspirational young man who started out designing and selling neckties and saying no to Bloomingdale's when it wanted to place an order, but on condition that he made the ties narrower. "I said, 'I can't,' and then I walked out," he recalls of the story he never tires of telling. "They came back six months later and said, 'We want to buy your ties.'" That small collection of ties racked up sales of half a million dollars in its first year. "So they said, 'What else can you do?' I was only a kid but I knew ties weren't enough; I knew someone would knock them off, so that's why I did shirts next, and then womenswear. It wasn't trendy, but it was new, and that's what I'm about," he summarises. "I told Bloomingdale's, 'Give me a shop. Let me do it.'" He opened his store there in 1969.

For all of his classicism, it is easy to underestimate how pioneering Lauren was. "I never wanted to do what everyone else was doing. If someone has already done something, then it doesn't interest me. I didn't know that any of it was going to be successful but I did know that if I wanted something, then other people would want it too. It was all instinct," he says. He was the first American designer to open a freestanding boutique in the US (in Beverly Hills, 1971), and he had a presence in Europe ahead of any other American designer. Furthermore, he has long embraced diversity, "because I believed it was right", and his casting has always included all ages and races. He was also the first fashion designer to launch homewares, in 1983, another innovative move that he simplifies with a shrug: "I mean, I know I'm not an interior designer but I know how I want my homes to look."

Of these there are several. He spends weekends with his family at their mansion in Bedford, New York. There is also their 6,475-hectare ranch in Colorado, a home in Jamaica to holiday in, and a vast collection of sports cars to play with – "a bad habit", albeit an investment said to be worth hundreds of millions.

As far as his own celebrity is concerned, Lauren now prefers a quieter life. "I used to like to be stopped, to be looked at, but I don't like it now. Sure, it's nice to get seated in a restaurant, but I like more privacy these days." Obviously his success has given him wealth, but he has given plenty back: he has a long history of supporting organisations dedicated to the fight against cancer.

It's clear he has no interest in slowing down. He goes to the office five days a week and remains as driven as he has ever been. "I like building new things," is how he puts it, whether that's collections, restaurants or stores. "I still do it because I don't feel like quitting. I love what I do, it feels good." Our conversation, unsurprisingly, turns to succession, but he's vague on the details. "I have a lot of good talent, some have been here for 30 or 40 years; they're very loyal because I take good care of them. But I really don't think about how the brand will look when I'm no longer here, what it might be like in 20 or 30 years. I'm not concerned about it. I design for forever, it's not for 'fashion'. The clothes get better with age. It's not about newness or oldness, it's about timelessness and the way you wear it that makes it better; not necessarily the clothes but how you put them together. I like things that last; clothes, cars, I like life that lasts. I know life is short, and I enjoy what I have, and I've enjoyed my life."

Before leaving, I wonder what he might have done had he not been Ralph Lauren. "I'd be the doorman in my building," he answers without hesitation. "I think about it often," he admits, smiling. "It's true. Every morning he says, 'Hello, Mr Lauren,' and I think, 'That could have been me.' Why not? I'm not a genius. He has a family, he has a life, he has his struggles, and he's happy. I just had the opportunity to do everything I wanted to do in my life. I wanted to do something great. I wanted to be great. Do I feel fortunate? Yes. Am I satisfied? Yeah, I think so," he says, pausing. "I don't have any regrets, I'm very lucky." ■

STYLING: DENA GIANNINI. PHOTOGRAPHS: SHARIF HAMZA. HAIR: GUIDO. MAKE-UP: DIANE KENDAL. MODELS: ANNEMARY ADERIBIGBE, AMAR AKWAY, ASSA BARADJI, JADE NGUYEN

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Alice Barbier and JS Roques.

Two piece

As fashion bridges gaps between womenswear and menswear, more couples, united by their unique connection, are translating that into the joy of a unified wardrobe. By Jonah Waterhouse.

Long before they were well-known fashion bloggers, Alice Barbier and JS Roques fell in love in high school. "I would say it was destiny," Barbier says from their home in Paris in a rare free moment during the autumn/winter '23/'24 shows, which she and her partner attend every season. "We were lucky enough to find that both of us were passionate about fashion."

After graduation, the couple moved to LA where Barbier completed a master's degree in communications and marketing and began a blog to document her style, hoping it would land her a job in fashion. She and her boyfriend posted pictures and audiences responded to their subversion of gender through clothing; bespoke suits and ties, for example, or loose-cut netted camisole tops and bags worn by both, meeting somewhere in the middle of gendered codes. A decade later, they have an audience of 333K followers and enjoy trading clothing and accessories. Barbier notes that handbags have become a shared infatuation of late.

"The past two years JS has been crazy about bags. It's a good thing for me because we can share them," she says with a laugh.

The couple's unified approach to getting dressed coincides with a wider shift in fashion. More influential designers are showing collections with clothes that are meant to be appreciated – or even shared – between men and women. Take Louis Vuitton spring/summer '23, which featured leather polo shirts and chino-style pants that would be apt for male clients, or Saint Laurent's autumn/winter '23/'24 menswear show which incorporated the broad-shouldered coats, hooded blouses and knit dresses of its recent womenswear collections. After the show, creative director Anthony Vaccarello told *Vogue Runway*, "I really want [the customer] to be almost one person, so women could be the men, and men could be the women. No difference."

The shift feels more pragmatic than previous conversations about fashion's approach to gender fluidity. Stars like David Bowie and Lady Gaga, who glamorously flouted gender norms through clothes and influenced fashion in the process, often relegated androgyny to a quixotic ideal and less of an everyday solution. But while Barbier and Roques say their style is more rooted in shared taste and ease, there's still an element of wanting to push the envelope.

"By showcasing different styles, wearing skirts over trousers or wearing heeled boots, for instance, I hope it will help men to be more open-minded and be bold," Roques says.

Nonetheless, practicality is important in the appeal of a shared wardrobe when both parties' tastes align. For artist couple Raenee Sydney and James "Marto" Martin, fashion has been a unifier since they first met six years ago. It's a passion that extends from formal wear to activewear purchased for the hikes they enjoy.

"We're really outdoorsy people, so through exploration in nature, functional pieces and accessories merge into our everyday lives," Sydney says. "We both find we have the same values when it comes to fashion – functionality, quality and brand value are super-important to us."

As with most couples intending to borrow one another's clothes, size differences present an issue. "I wear a lot of his clothes, but he doesn't really wear a lot of mine, because he wears a double-XL or extra-large," Sydney says. "In saying that, we have the

Left: Raenee Sydney and James "Marto" Martin and **above**, the pair wearing clothes from Perks and Mini. **Right and below**: Emma and Richard Jarman wearing clothes from their own label, Commas.

same tops and pants and [shoes], or he'll wear something, and I'll say, 'That looks really good. I want to wear the same thing.'"

For Sydney, Martin's intrepid approach to fashion, through lysergic colours, patterns and shapes, plays a role in her attraction to him. "Marto is very loud in his dressing, in a good way. Because it's quite bold, I find that quite attractive. We both also really value each other's opinions when it comes to style and fashion."

The unifying power of clothing isn't lost on Emma and Richard Jarman, the husband-and-wife founders of Australian label Commas. In fact, it played a role in their very first encounter.

"When we started dating, at the first party we kissed at, Richard was wearing this brown Sandro shirt," Emma recalls. "At the time, Sandro was really amazing, and I had a few pieces so I knew it. And he was like, 'How did you know what that was?'"

Their mutual interest in fashion extends beyond the brand they design together, and into their personal archive. "We bought a new pair of baggy Acne Studios jeans recently … I went up a size, and we just started sharing them," Emma says. A handbag from the Spanish label Hereu is another recent splurge. The couple's fluid approach to fashion is reflected in Commas, where menswear and womenswear silhouettes collide in harmony. Despite current conversations around gendered fashion, dressing up is far beyond an of-the-moment shift for couples like Richard and Emma. For them, sharing an appreciation for clothing is a way of life.

"You know when you see those cute, elderly couples, and it's not like they've organised it, but their outfits speak to each other?" Richard says. "I hope that when we're in our 70s or 80s, we end up being one of those."

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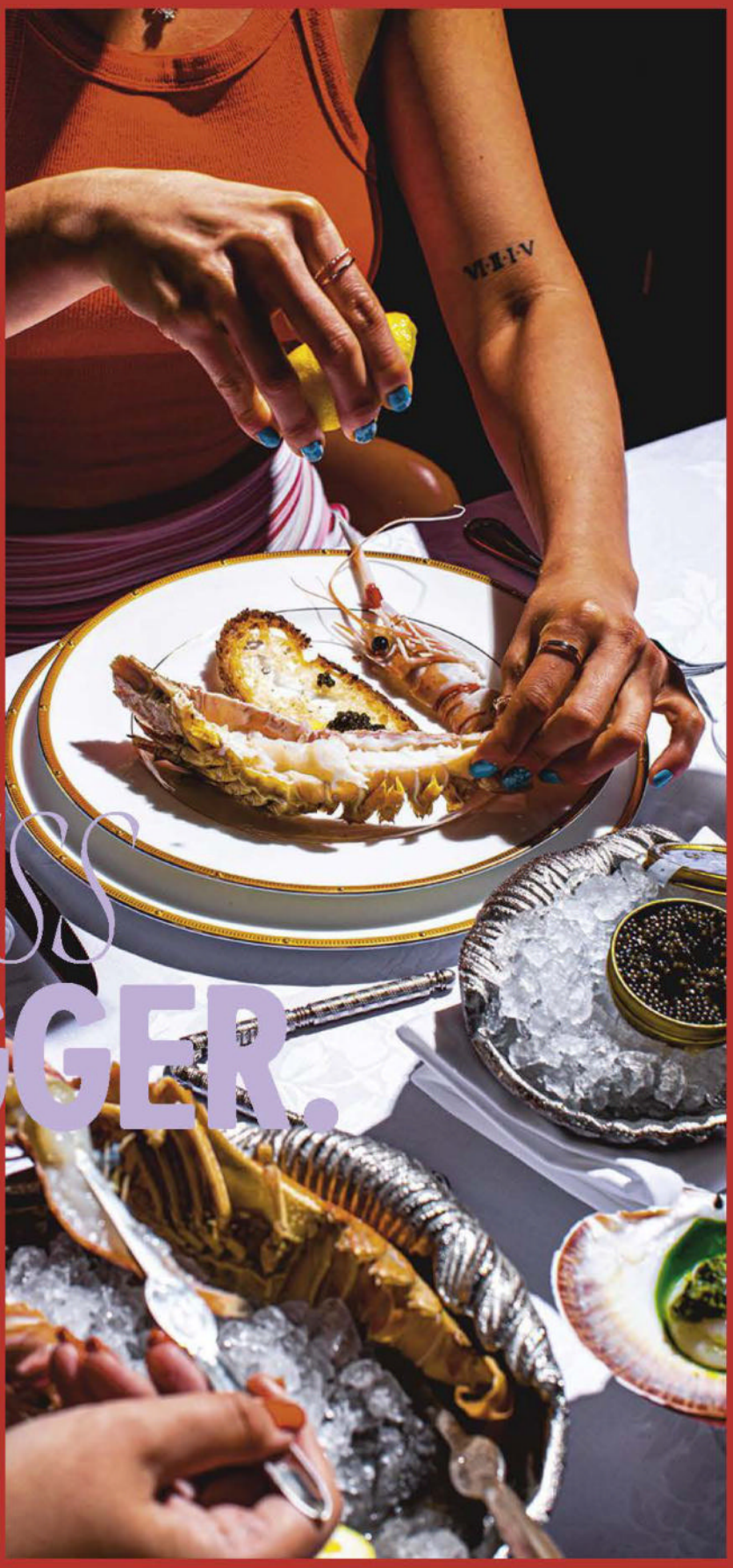

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Heir supply

With equal parts heart and precision, Olivia Bond is the independent designer reviving heirloom jewellery. By Alice Birrell.

Olivia Bond is getting animated about lasers and candlelight. The jeweller, in her Sydney CBD studio, a quiet enclave in a heritage-listed former hotel, is explaining how nowadays diamonds are cut by laser, so precise it renders things a bit on the clinical side. "A computer decides the angle of every facet, whereas back in the day they were hand-cleaved," she says. "They were designed to sparkle by candlelight, not electricity. The romance of that …"

Demurely dressed in a vintage cream Chanel jacket with black trim, Bond, who became known as an unofficial denizen of diamonds for the Emerald City's social scene, sets her mix of gold rings a-sparkle, gesturing as she talks. From a diamond valuer and grader, she is now a full-service jeweller, sourcing, engineering and offering bespoke creations alongside a growing line-up of timeless pieces that tap styles that have endured from different eras.

Though science informs her understanding of gemstones as a certified gemologist, it is the X-factor pull of tiny wonders of light and colour, forged across millennia of unimaginable geological pressure, that is on show when she speaks.

It follows that for Bond, sourcing entails not just gem fairs and mine contacts, but auction houses, hunting down antique pieces that look dated today – a brooch, a hat pin – and plucking from them their stones, chosen for their idiosyncrasies and character.

"If I see a good stone, it doesn't really matter what the setting is like, I take it out and use it," she says, eschewing the D Flawless mentality that's prevailed in contemporary jewellery.

It's a skill not all jewellers possess, one honed during her time at Sotheby's in London where she landed after leaving her hometown in Perth, alongside husband Jeremy Bond, grandson of tycoon Alan Bond. Not enamoured with a degree in speech pathology, Bond found her way to Sotheby's valuation counter, an experience she describes as the ultimate elevated *Antiques Roadshow*. "A lot of the specialists who I used to work with are now on [the show]," she laughs. There, she learned to spot standouts in the stream of family heirlooms and antiques. On return to Australia, she studied gemology and diamond grading and after quietly sourcing stones for friends and contacts she'd made during a stint at Bulgari, she began creating the odd piece. That grew when she had the time to focus on a fully-fledged line, and delve into her inspirations during lockdown.

"This setting, which is my most popular, is based on a 19th-century one," she says, holding up an unusually hued, teal Australian sapphire in a scalloped black rhodium setting suspended from a figaro chain.

She owes her taste for design details of era past in part to her grandmother who, in 70s Perth, stood out with her taste for glamour. "She had this insane jewellery collection. I remember painted shells she picked up from Hawaii. Every week, when we went around for lunch, me and my sister would sit on her bed and just open up the collection," she recounts. "You could see that she had collected these things over years and they all meant something to her."

The family conviction in taste, and joy in jewellery, is a legacy she's carrying on; her other grandmother was also a gemologist and has inspired a new heart-shaped necklace. "It planted the seed," she says.

As she speaks, she takes out an exquisite antique Columbian emerald she's saving for the right piece. In a tiny cream box, it is the colour of a luminous green grotto, lit from within. "Emeralds – they don't sparkle, they have a vitreous lustre," she says, a glint in her eye. "They look almost liquid." In her hands it will begin a new life. "I love the idea of jewellery having multiple owners, outliving us."

From top: Olivia Bond necklace, $5,500, ring, $6,000, and bracelet, $12,500.

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To die for

Elizabeth Olsen's next trick? A true-crime television show that upends our understanding of the perfect family – and the perfect life. By Hannah-Rose Yee.

Family is like a coffee filter, says Elizabeth Olsen. The actor is one of six – two of her siblings, most famously, are twin sisters Mary-Kate and Ashley, erstwhile actors themselves and now the architects behind the whispered luxury of The Row – and she is ruminating on what family means to her. To begin with? "Everything."

"When I think of family, I think of just constant noise and the comfort of that," she reflects. "We always had friends over at our place, so then you triple us, and it was so amazing having that kind of energy growing up. It's something that I hope to be able to have as well. I would do anything for my family, truly."

Family is also, Olsen adds, an opportunity "to be a filter of what works, maybe what didn't work". Like a dynastical colander? A DNA sieve? "Or even a coffee filter," she smiles. "Like, 'Well, maybe this stuff doesn't need to come with us, but this stuff should, that made this delicious coffee.' I think every generation is an amazing opportunity to try and improve upon itself."

Mary-Kate, Ashley and Elizabeth Olsen.

Olsen is particularly insightful for someone who stepped off a 26-hour flight only this morning. ("The three-hour nap is king," she notes sagely.) The 34-year-old has just returned to her home in California from Kuwait, where she attended a convention, and before that, New York, where she worked on a small film for only a handful of weeks. The experience was the complete opposite of her time in the tidal embrace of the Marvel world, where she played the all-powerful sorceress Wanda Maximoff, or even on her latest endeavour, the true-crime miniseries *Love & Death*. Filmed over a seven-and-a-half-month period in Texas, the television show recounts the real story of Candy Montgomery, who paid a house call to her friend Betty Gore one day in 1980 and killed her. At the eventual trial, Candy claimed self-defence and was found not guilty, despite the fact that she had recently been involved in an affair with Betty's husband, Allan, played in the series by Jesse Plemons.

Olsen plays Candy with an engagingly salty energy: a pillar of her small-town

community, a loving wife and a devoted mother, yet the kind of person you could count on for a brisk gossip. "She was a really beloved woman," Olsen notes. "People were so shocked to hear something like this happened." As was the case in her Emmy-nominated performance in *WandaVision*, it is Olsen's eyes that hold your attention when Candy's lacquered shell begins to crack; once bright, now dull. A little hurt, but mostly disappointed.

For the better half of a year, Olsen lived inside Candy's head. "I actually love spending this much time with the characters, because they become more specific. You take on mannerisms," she shares. "It all just kind of happens … like a merger between you and this other thing, and your imagination." It helps that – believe it or not, gruesome events aside – Olsen describes Candy as "so progressive and modern", an entrepreneur with multiple business ideas, and an "optimist". "Or at least that's how I chose to portray her," she adds. "Leading with positivity." Had Candy been in possession of anything other than this bushy-tailed, can-do Texan spirit it would have been a different question altogether. Still, "it's such a journey", she admits. "Every long job I have, month three I have a huge breakdown where I'm like, 'Oh I can't see the end of the tunnel. Oh this is *so hard*.'"

Elizabeth Olsen returns to the small screen this month in the true-crime miniseries *Love & Death*.

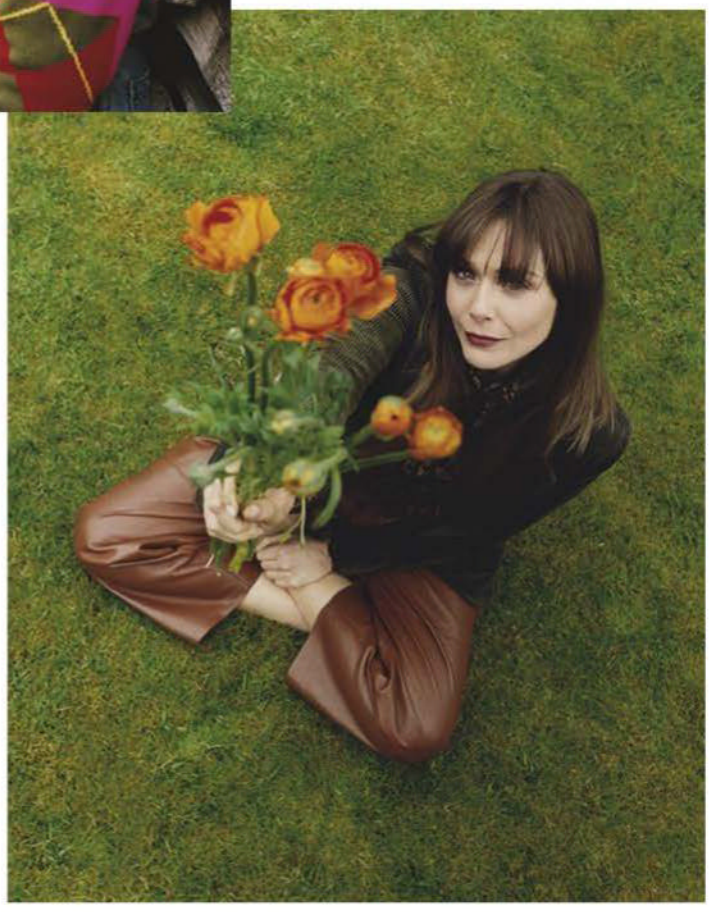
Olsen describes her job as an actor in the manner of a ruthless lawyer billing by the hour: never to judge and always to "defend, defend, defend". "I definitely don't morally agree with a lot of the decisions characters I play make, but I have to understand the circumstances as to why that became the option for them in these moments," she explains. For Candy, it was first and foremost her nature as an "obsessive pleaser" who was, at the time she is introduced in *Love & Death*, searching for something more. "I feel like she read a lot of romance novels and I think she was just a dreamer," Olsen posits. Or as Candy puts it in the first episode: "I have done all the things a wife is supposed to do. The house. The meals. Where is the payback?"

"She got married very young. They were practically children," Olsen explains. "Then you have all these responsibilities and your own desires get left behind. And I think that's a really frustrating place to be in." In the series, Candy and Allan's affair unfolds with Wes Andersonian precision and production values: the pair would meet in Allan's lunch hour in a motel, eat a packed lunch prepared by Candy and then make their way to the velvet-covered bed. (Candy's lunch menus are chronicled in the original *Texas Monthly* article that followed the trial with absurd levels of detail, from the teriyaki beef strips and marinated chicken with thousand island dressing to the cheesecake dessert. "That was a very creative article," remarks Olsen.)

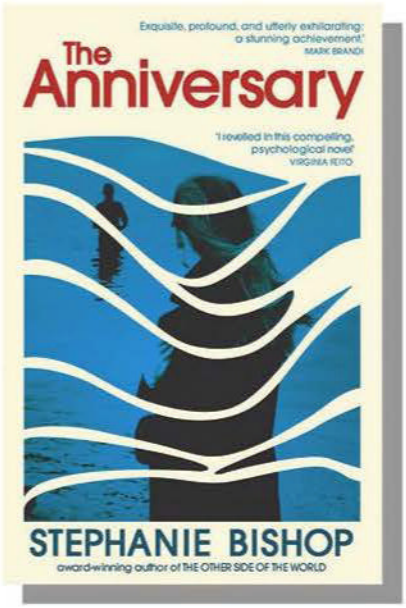
The actor stresses that *Love & Death* is a true-crime show with a poetic license. Created by *Big Little Lies* and *The Undoing*'s David E. Kelley and executive produced by Nicole Kidman, the series takes an off-kilter approach to real events. *Election*, *Blue Velvet* and *To Die For* were all references; one episode presents a hard cut between Candy and Allan in an "Oh god" moment of postprandial ecstasy to a pastor in the pulpit delivering his Sunday sermon. Olsen describes the tone as "Americana, extreme situations happening to small-town people". "There are moments where it feels completely absurd," she says, "but the more honest you play it, the more humour there is." After Betty's death, the humour is scaled back. "Honouring the fact that this happened to people, there are generations that exist after, and trying to be respectful."

Over the past decade, Olsen has made six films and a television series in Marvel's name. Her passion right now lies with projects such as *Love & Death*, or small films, or maybe one day a play in London's West End. "I'm really proud of the things I am trying to get made," the actor shares, as she uses her Marvel-burnished star power to work with creatives she admires on the kinds of characters she welcomes spending seven months with. "It's really freeing, physically, to play someone who feels outside of yourself," Olsen muses. "You feel like you can't make a wrong decision. But when you are playing more of a version of yourself, I feel a little bit more stiff as an actor. It's fun to play a bit."

Love & Death *is streaming on Binge from April 27.*



MAIN IMAGES: MAYA SKELTON (OLSENS) GETTY IMAGES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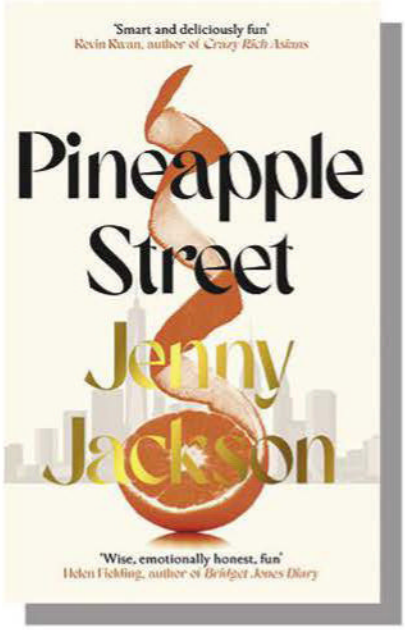
The Anniversary (Hachette, $32.99) by Stephanie Bishop.

A successful novelist, JB, and her husband, Patrick, a film director, take a cruise to celebrate their wedding anniversary. All seems well – JB is on the precipice of being awarded a major literary prize – until disaster strikes and her husband tragically goes missing overboard. As the search for him through murky open water begins, she must wrestle with the truth about their marriage and the myriad secrets they were keeping from each other, all with devastating results. Stephanie Bishop is among Australia's most celebrated novelists, an award-winning writer whose work is always thrilling – and surprising. This is one of the most anticipated new releases of the year.

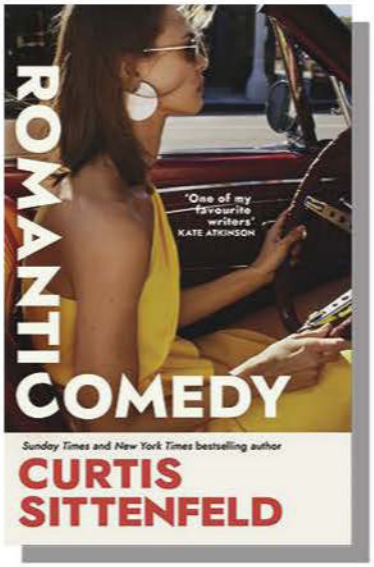
Romantic Comedy (Doubleday, $32.99) by Curtis Sittenfeld.

A *Notting Hill*-esque story of a sketch comedy writer who, against all odds, falls for a very famous musician. It's a dazzling tale of how everybody just wants someone to tell all their best jokes to. If writer Curtis Sittenfeld – the author of *American Wife*, *Rodham*, *Eligible* and more – wrote the phone book, we'd devour it in one sitting and call it a page-turner.


'Smart and deliciously fun'
Kevin Kwan, author of Crazy Rich Asians
Pineapple Street
Jenny Jackson
'Wise, emotionally honest, fun'
Helen Fielding, author of Bridget Jones's Diary

Pineapple Street (Hutchinson Heinemann, $32.99) by Jenny Jackson.

Three very different women in a New York dynasty wrestle with the meaning of love, status and wealth in this modern-day Jane Austen comedy of manners – set against a backdrop of Brooklyn Heights. For anyone who loved *The Paper Palace* by Miranda Cowley Heller or *Great Circle* by Maggie Shipstead.



Really Good, Actually (4th Estate, $29.99) by Monica Heisey.

This post-divorce coming-of-age story follows a Toronto academic called Maggie whose separation from her university sweetheart in her late 20s kickstarts a whole new chapter in her life. Deeply relatable, very funny and totally heartwarming – we expect nothing less from the debut novel by one of the writers of *Schitt's Creek*.

Love story

An unlikely couple. A post-divorce happy ending. A family saga of love. These must-read new books celebrate romance in all its forms. By Hannah-Rose Yee.

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Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953).

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DEL CORE S/S '23

State of dress

With the dress emerging on the runway as a symbol of empowered elegance, its story as a continued battleground for womanhood deserves a closer look. By Alice Birrell.

Liquid gowns oozing languorous elegance, slinky neo-goddess drape twisted around every womanly curve, knock-out wiggle dresses in silk taffeta, and hyper-fine underwire tracing breastbones – everywhere you turned for spring/summer '23 the runways were thrumming with the simmering heat of a glamorous feminine strength.

LaQuan Smith, who has staked his output on high-octane after-dark sizzle, is one of many designers serving up the dress as the new power piece. "Dresses have always been a fierce show of power due to their innate femininity," Smith says. "To me, there is nothing more awe-inspiring than a woman being her truest self." More recently, Maximilian Davis, in his second Ferragamo collection, infused the 1950s skirts of Audrey Hepburn and the nipped-waist smoulder of Marilyn Monroe in autumn/winter '23/'24. The latter was also cited by Dilara Findikoğlu and David Koma in New York and London respectively in self-possessed displays of smoking-siren seduction.

It all felt as though designers were declaring a new aesthetic of female power, one refreshingly led by silhouettes no longer borrowing from the boys – the suit, the shoulder. Instead, it was happily rooted in the history of women's dress, handing back an agency and an assertion that femininity equates with authority.

But is it that simple? Have we entered an age – as gender equality still eludes women, from the professional to personal – in which we've securely claimed dresses as part of the canon of power dressing, no looking back? A fortuitously timed new exhibition, at the Australian Centre for Moving Image (ACMI) examines just this, relooking at fashion's fascination with silver-screen heroines. It highlights that the path from Hollywood's golden age of glamour to the assertive style of today was not straight, but marred by setbacks and hard wins, the dress a battleground of self-determination.

"Tropes of the femme fatale, are really interesting," remarks Bethan Johnson, curator at ACMI of *Goddess: Power, Glamour, Rebellion*, naming one of the first archetypes of dangerous, potent femininity, echoes of which can be found on today's runways. Taking in the impact of women in film, including Monroe and Marlene Dietrich, the exhibition encourages viewers to rethink the concept of the passive pin-up. "These are really strong, powerful women wearing a lot of great costuming and shapes. That kind of power dressing came about as a response to women's place in the world: you have that increased visibility following World War II where women are much more in the public sphere and have a greater voice, a greater power."

The centrepiece, and the opening element of the exhibition is a tracing of Marilyn Monroe's legendary strapless dress on screen and matching gloves in Pepto pink. Forever entering the public consciousness in 1953's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and coming to symbolise the ideal feminine under the male gaze, it was, in fact, a stand-in. The original, captured on Monroe in

DILARA FINDIKOĞLU A/W '23/'24

Monroe in a wardrobe test for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* in the outfit deemed too provocative.

DAVID KOMA A/W '23/'24

DILARA FINDIKOĞLU A/W '23/'24

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a wardrobe test, was a fish-net body stocking with strategically placed crystal embellishment. "But then her nudes were sold and going to be printed in *Playboy*," says Johnson. "The studio quickly scrambled because they thought this costume was going to be just too much. They wanted to flip the narrative on Marilyn and make her seem more respectable."

Movie executives, wary of the then prevailing Hays Code – rules of propriety aimed to censor overt sexuality – asked the actor to deny the nudes were her. She wouldn't, telling them they were in every garage and barber shop around the world. "So, she actually owns that, and that feels pretty radical in terms of not outwardly having feelings of shame," observes Johnson.

Though she ultimately dons the pink dress, the experience is the first in many tugs of war, a most formative battle happening soon after. Frustrated by the calibre of roles she is sent, in the mould of the endearingly naïve Lorelei in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, she demands to see the script of an upcoming movie the studio wanted her to appear in, with Frank Sinatra slated for the lead. She is denied, also finding out she will be paid a third of his fee. "So, she sets up her own production company. And she negotiated a new contract deal with the studio," Johnson says. It gives her script, director and cinematographer approval. "Those three elements give her the ability to shape who she is on screen. Today, we would liken that to being an executive producer. She really is in control of her own image."

It was unheard of in the 1950s. "Marilyn is a fantastic example of misreading; burying her more subversive transgressive acts, where she really is remembered as a kind of dumb blonde character," Johnson says.

"She sets up her own production company ... She really is in control of her own image"

It goes part way in explaining why the pink dress, itself beautiful but simple in design, has endured – Madonna adopts it in "Material Girl", Margot Robbie in 2020's *Birds of Prey*, and iterations of its brand of elegance proliferate on runways today. It is not a simple expression of elegance, but, re-read this way, becomes a symbol of the tension between who you are and who others want you to be.

All things going well, women like this seemed to be helping the dress on its seamless way to becoming women's own unique symbol of autonomy. But somewhere, roughly around the 80s, we got caught up in suits, with muscular silhouettes of a traditionally male physique. Richard Thompson Ford, a professor of law and author of *Dress Codes: How the Laws of Fashion Made History*, says deeply entrenched ideas around gender were never going to permit the dress to tie itself to connotations of authority and strength so easily. "Before the 18th century, elite menswear was sumptuous and ornate – think of the velvets, silks, brocades and jewellery of a Tudor-era aristocrat or Renaissance prince. That changed with the rise of religious reform and the Enlightenment: new values like the work ethic, rationality and industriousness displace older values like honour and display. Men's clothing got streamlined, sober, and, at least seemingly, practical," says Ford. "Feminine clothing has been designed in opposition to masculine attire and that means it is designed to evoke vanity, whimsy and impractical decorativeness." He says we're still working to erase the idea that women's clothing is decorative and frivolous. "These deep-seated cultural associations make it hard to use feminine garments as power pieces."

But designers are working continually to do it. Saint Laurent's liquid dresses of spring/summer '23 recalled a 30s curve-skimming insouciance blended with a 21st century approach via near-sheer body-revealing jersey. Or Alaïa's off-shoulder after-eight gowns, spliced open to reveal the entire stomach. "There's an attempt to capture the allure of traditional femininity but leave behind some of the patriarchy baggage," says Ford. "Women today use traditional femininity in a new way – less about adopting the old styles sincerely and more about making a commentary on them."

So when we slip into a dress, we should champion it as a symbol of power, knowing it's hard-won, its status somewhat flimsy, set in motion by trailblazers like Monroe, one of the first to see women's wardrobes as a space for contention. "It's like a conversation among women," says Britt Romstad, ACMI's director of visitor experience, of the continued recontextualisations of that pink dress. "There's a conversation going on across countries and time." One that's about power, and how beautifully womanly it could look.

Goddess: Power, Glamour, Rebellion *opens at ACMI on April 5.*

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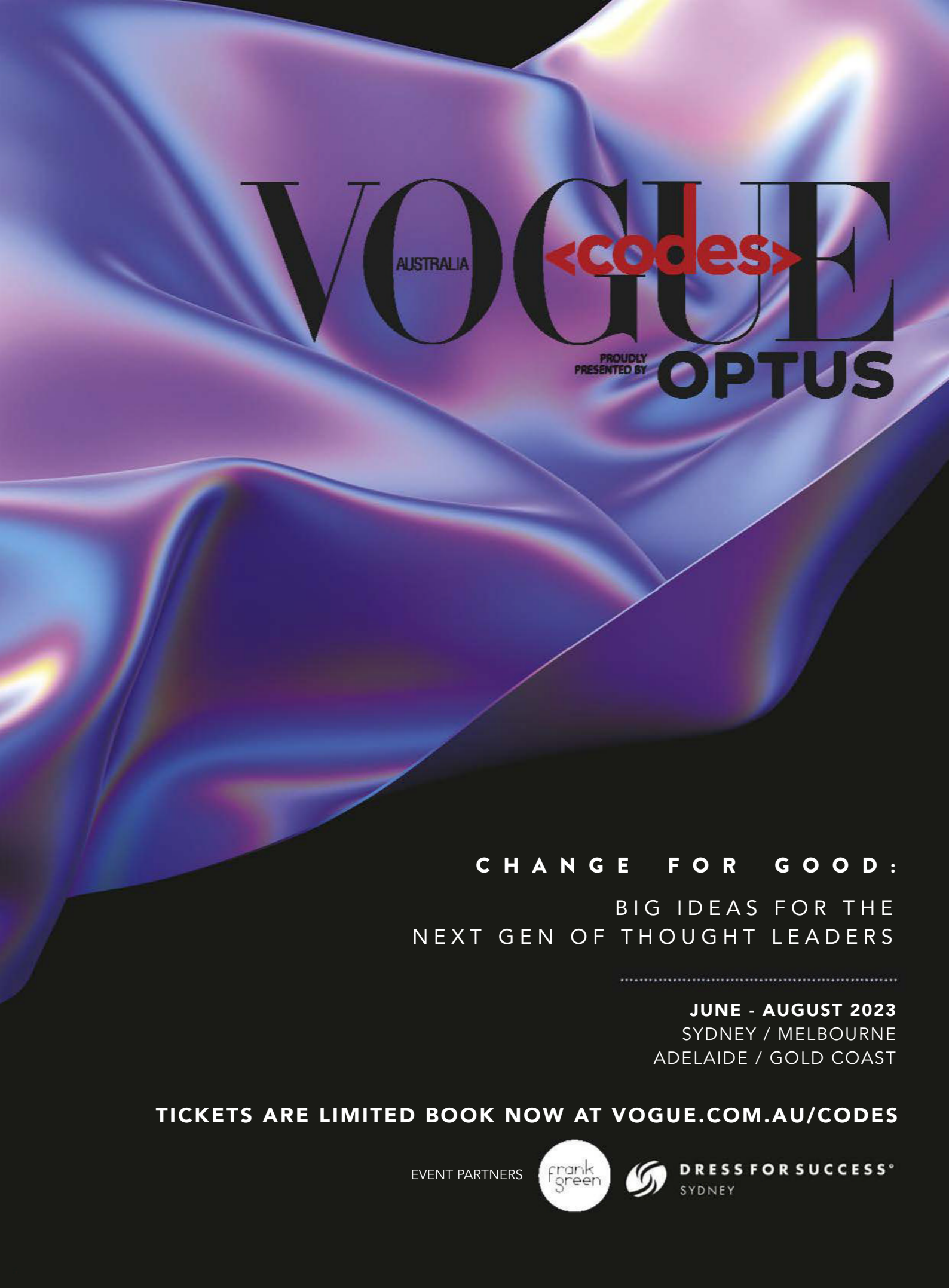

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CRUISE AESTHETICS

Curate a special onboard wardrobe with these packing ideas for travelling Cunard style.

PACK LIGHT

Fashion forward, lightweight and versatile, linen is a great option for almost any occasion: think longline shirts poolside, a tonal matching set for lazy lunches, and wide-leg pants paired with a cami and clutch for evenings. Another must-pack item is a silk slip dress – wear with a straw bag and jute espadrilles for a casual outing, or layer with fine gold necklaces and add a pair of kitten heels for evening.

GO ALL OUT

Get into the elevated dress code for one of Cunard's revered Gala Evenings. Popular themes include Black and White, Roaring Twenties, and Masquerade – if there was ever a time for sequins, this is it.

SLIDE EYES

Pack a pair (or three) of slides in woven, leather, platform or jewelled designs – ideal for wearing between dips in the pool, heading back to your room after a show at the Royal Court Theatre, or strolling up to watch a film under the stars.

GET CARRIED AWAY

A large straw tote is a non-negotiable, too, as is a slouchy clutch in a bold colour for carrying your room key, sunglasses or show program. And if you find yourself without the right cover-up or pair of statement-making sunglasses, head into one of the many onboard boutiques to top up your wardrobe.

A ROYAL AFFAIR

Should one ever find oneself lucky enough to sail with Cunard, settle in for some regal British hospitality. Since 1840, the English cruise operator has been delivering an exceptionally high level of luxury on board its fleet of ships – *Queen Elizabeth*, *Queen Mary 2* and *Queen Victoria* – with each name a testament to the poised, polished service guests can expect. Its long-awaited fourth ship, *Queen Anne*, is set to sail in 2024.

DELIGHT IN TEA AT SEA

Nothing says elegance quite like an afternoon tea, and Cunard's signature ritual takes place at 3:30pm daily. Witness the procession of white-gloved waiters as they present an array of finger sandwiches and freshly baked scones served on fine bone china, of course.

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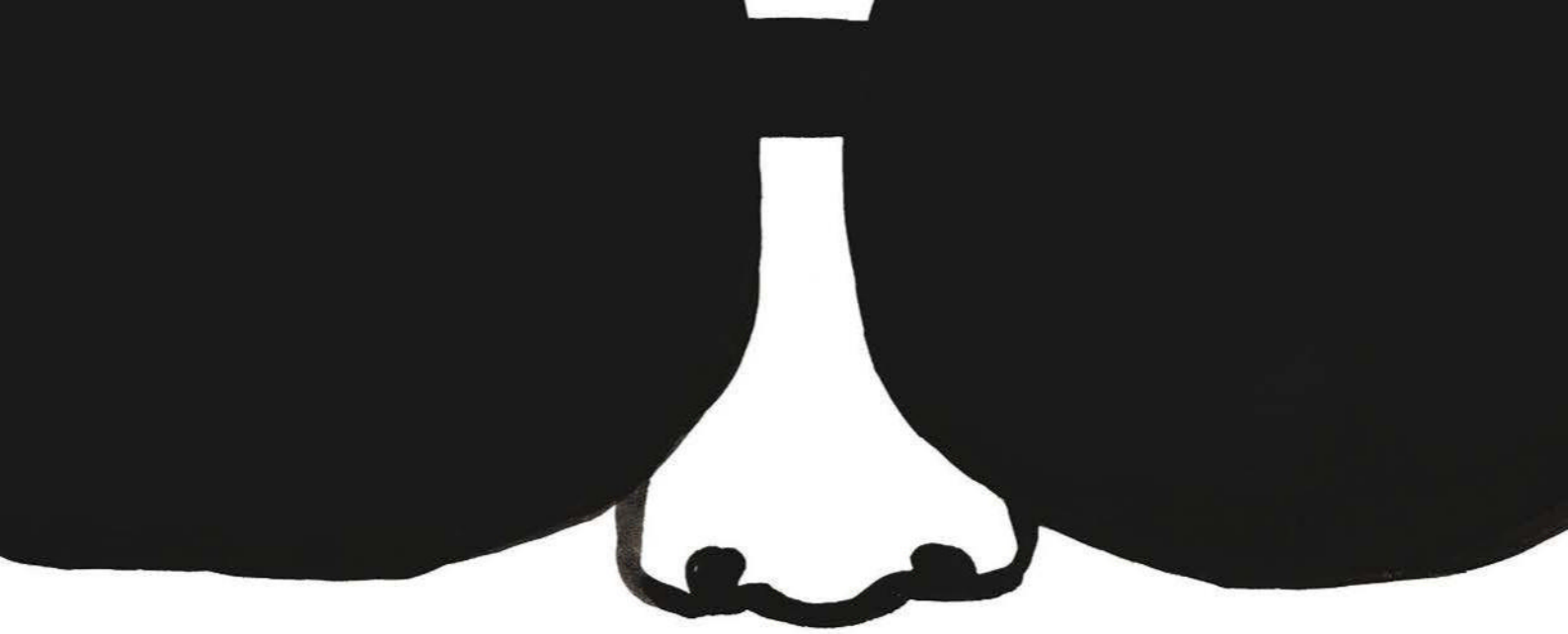
No Cunard voyage is complete without a session at the Mareel Wellness & Beauty spa. The tranquil sanctuary offers holistic treatments inspired by the restorative powers of the ocean. Soak in the view from the top deck during sunset yoga and enjoy the weightless sensation of the thermal pool. Or, let your stress melt away at the Finnish sauna and be refreshed by cooling mist in the sensory showers (exclusive to *Queen Anne*).

DRESS TO IMPRESS

Couture meets cruising at Cunard's Gala Evenings, where guests receive a formal invitation delivered to their stateroom. Just like a film scene from the Hollywood glam era, passengers emerge in their finest evening wear. It's easy to see why style icons such as Elizabeth Taylor and Audrey Hepburn chose to cruise with Cunard. For those more interested in culinary delights than cocktail dresses, there are plenty of casual options. The Golden Lion is a gastro pub serving an array of enticing British dishes, while a visit to Lido and Kings Court is an enticing, informal experience featuring classic and continental flavour pairings.

CUNARD

Find out more at **cunard.com.**



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VOGUE DIARY

Explore what's in store and worth having this month.

CLEAN CUT

The attributes to covet for an investment bag? Quality, functionality and timeless style. Enter Burberry's Frances bag. With a harmonious symmetry of clean lines and curved top handles, its understated design is defined by 24-carat gold-plated hardware, a leather-inlaid TB motif (in honour of the label's founder, Thomas Burberry) and a leather-wrapped mirror charm engraved with the Burberry logo. Made from grainy leather, it's available in a host of colours or alligator-effect embossed leather. *Go to au.burberry.com.*

ROCK STARS

Mesmerising, dazzling and unique, Bond Street Jewellers's pieces are made to be treasured for generations. With more than 150 years of combined experience, every diamond and gemstone is hand-selected for its brilliance while every piece is intricately crafted from design to final polish. Discover your favourite from classic to contemporary, or work with artisans to create your very own bespoke piece. *Go to bondstreetjewellers.com.au.*

MEET YOUR MATCH

Looking for a new foundation? Estée Lauder's new Double Wear Stay-In-Place Matte Powder Foundation ticks all the boxes. Silky soft, weightless with a flawless finish, it can be used as both a foundation and a setting powder, and offers 12-hour wear. Extra bonus, it's also formulated to control oil and shine while the compact is refillable. *Find your shade at esteelauder.com.au.*

TRAVEL LIGHT

You'll wonder how you lived without Wanderers Travel Co.'s Copenhagen belt bag. Crafted from hand-stitched quilted leather with a wide "belt" strap, plus longer crossbody strap and removable wristlet, it allows you to skip out the door hands-free with all your essentials safely attached. Playful, practical and especially handy for travel, walks and festivals. *Visit wandererstravelco.com.*

VOGUE AUSTRALIA

Runs deep

Adut Akech and her brother, Bior. Adut wears a PRADA dress, $3,700. TIFFANY & CO. (first) earrings, $6,600. Her own earrings. Bior wears a LOUIS VUITTON jacket, $5,700, and shorts, $1,950. TIFFANY & CO. bracelet, $100,000. His own earrings.

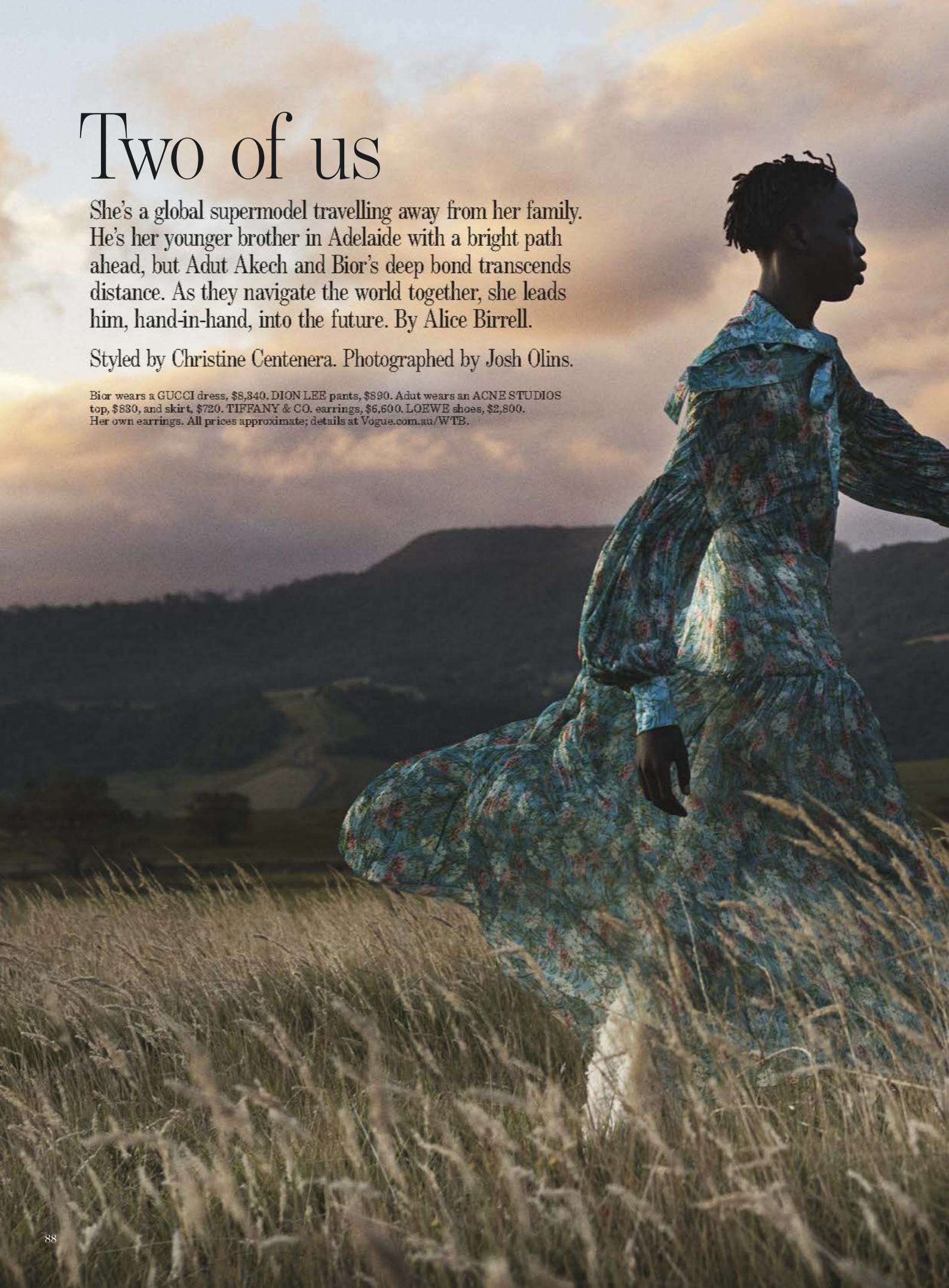
JOSH HOUNS
ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

Two of us

She's a global supermodel travelling away from her family. He's her younger brother in Adelaide with a bright path ahead, but Adut Akech and Bior's deep bond transcends distance. As they navigate the world together, she leads him, hand-in-hand, into the future. By Alice Birrell.

Styled by Christine Centenera. Photographed by Josh Olins.

Bior wears a GUCCI dress, $8,340. DION LEE pants, $890. Adut wears an ACNE STUDIOS top, $830, and skirt, $720. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. LOEWE shoes, $2,800. Her own earrings. All prices approximate; details at Vogue.com.au/WTB.



Hey, you've got to turn on your camera." Adut Akech Bior is directing her 17-year-old brother, Bior, over a video call from her home in Los Angeles. She's giving big-sister tone, a familiar sound of warmth and feigned impatience, the kind reserved especially for siblings, as they prepare for their first-ever *Vogue* cover interview together.

In short order, her little brother appears on screen in his school uniform from Adelaide – his hometown and formerly hers – where it's early morning. Over in LA, where Adut moved from New York in late 2021, it's midday, and the 23-year-old model is folded into a chair in a loose, long-sleeved pink T-shirt. She's fresh-faced in her light-flooded home, though jet-lagged from a flying 24-hour visit to New York – the life of an in-demand model – and about to return to the airport to collect her sister who has just landed at LAX.

Bior is every bit the professional considering he's still a teenager and this cover marks only his second-ever fashion shoot. His first was back in 2018 when Adut's entire family, five siblings including then-baby Akuol, her mum Mary, her cousin and his wife, was shot for *Vogue* Australia in their Adelaide home. "It was amazing," Bior begins, reflecting on his latest turn on set, alongside Adut on her sixth cover for her home *Vogue*. "It was a good experience … and to do it with my sister was good."

"It was just 'good'? That's it?!" interjects Adut, leaning closer to the screen with mock incredulity. "I said *amazing*," Bior shoots back. She softens and laughs. "No, I mean, I agree with what he said. It was so special for me. I always love whenever I get to do anything with my family, and this was another very special moment."

So far so normal, a repartee between siblings, except normal doesn't really describe these two. Adut is one of Australia's most successful model exports, charting a supernova course that saw her ricochet from a Saint Laurent exclusive in 2016, to shooting with a dream list of photographers that leave few, if any, big names off, from Steven Meisel, Paolo Roversi and the late Peter Lindbergh. She's fronted campaigns for Chanel, Bottega Veneta, Valentino (where she became the first Black woman to be the face of the house's fragrance), Fendi and Tiffany & Co., was shot for Tim Walker's 2018 Pirelli calendar, appeared again in this year's edition and more recently secured an Estée Lauder contract, long considered a model-career apogee. All the while, she's forged lifelong connections with heavyweights such as Valentino's Pierpaolo Piccioli, British *Vogue* editor-in-chief Edward Enninful, who she met on the Pirelli set, and mentor Naomi Campbell. The latter two fashion guardians with a closeness akin to parents; she calls Enninful "Papa".

Bior, though, claims a unique place in her life that can't be usurped. Firstly, he is part of her family, long Adut's anchoring force around which she fits her demanding career. Bior is also her only brother. She was in the room, aged seven, when he was born. "He's my little baby. I raised him basically since that day, and I watched him grow up from then to this point."

Part of a big family, the siblings' household is one of communal love – a community that welcomes cousins, friends and relatives some of whom are also refugees. Like her aunty, who moved first to Adelaide with Adut's older sister before Adut, speaking Swahili and Dinka and no English, followed from Kenya with her mum at age eight. It's not hard to see why words like "sister" become fluid and apply not only to blood siblings. Adut grew up in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and was born on Christmas Day as the family fled violence in South Sudan. She spent her youngest years seeing fellow refugees band together in the face of uncertainty and fear, the idea of family a porous unit but with an immovable core of her mum and siblings at its centre; her father has passed away.

"We're all that we had – each other," she offers plainly of days at the camp, or on the move around Kenya waiting for their visa approvals. "We had no choice but to be close and stick together." She knows it shaped her. "I feel like I'm loving, caring, and I'm very empathetic because that's something that I saw in my family and my community and my household," she reflects. "Knowing that no matter what, these people will always have your back."

There is no narrative of Adut booking top runways and flying the coop without a backward glance. Being away from her family for too long is anathema to her core person. "I have a hard time leaving," she says after periods at home, doing things like cooking, cleaning, dropping her siblings to school, her brother to soccer practice – Bior is an aspiring player. "When she leaves it's the worst feeling because I know she's going to be gone for a while," he reflects. "Everyone is so sad."

Despite this, she stays in constant touch – she calls her mother Mary without fail every day. Traversing family chats, Instagram messaging and FaceTime, she makes it work. →

Bior wears a FENDI shirt, $1,390, pants, $1,390, hat, $950, and shoes, $1,450. CARTIER ring, $12,900. Adut wears a MIU MIU top, $11,500, skirt, $10,000, shorts, $1,340, bra, $1,010, briefs, $720, and boots, $1,890. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. VAN CLEEF & ARPELS ring, $13,400. Her own earrings.

JOSH HSOI

This page: Adut wears a BURBERRY dress and shoes, both P.O.A. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. Her own earrings. Bior wears a CRAIG GREEN jumper and pants, both P.O.A. CARTIER necklace, $381,000. BURBERRY shoes, P.O.A. **Opposite page:** Bior wears a DION LEE top, $550. PRADA shorts, $5,000. PASPALEY earrings, $2,280. TIFFANY & CO. bracelet, $10,500. Adut wears an ALAÏA bodysuit, P.O.A., and skirt, $3,900. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. VAN CLEEF & ARPELS ring, $13,400. Her own earrings.

SINTOHSO

Opposite page: Adut wears a PRADA dress, $3,700. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. Her own earrings. BIOR wears a Louis Vuitton jacket, $5,700, and shorts, $1,950. TIFFANY & CO. bracelet, $100,000. His own earrings. **This page:** CHANEL jacket, $16,520, from the CHANEL boutiques. MOLLY GODDARD T-shirt, $340. PASPALEY necklace, $19,800.

JOSH OLINS

This page: FENDI dress, $7,200. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600, and bracelet, $21,200. 16ARLINGTON shoes, P.O.A. Her own earrings. **Opposite page:** Bior wears an EMPORIO ARMANI top, $1,300, and pants, $1,100. SIMONE ROCHA gloves, P.O.A. Adut wears a SIMONE ROCHA dress, $2,685. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. LOEWE shoes, $2,800. Her own earrings.

JOSH OLINS

"I'm just so happy he's grown up in a household of women, because I don't think that there are any better teachers in this world than women. He's grown up to be such a good, respectable, well-mannered young man"

"Akuol, I spoke to her at 6am yesterday," she says of her sister, age six. "I spoke to Bior, Yar, Mum, Alakiir …" she reels off.

"She keeps all of our time zones on her clock app and makes a habit of checking on everyone at the appropriate times – even if it's in the middle of the night for her," says best friend Winniy Manyang, whom Adut refers to as a sister. "She *loves* a long FaceTime," Manyang says. "Sometimes we sit on [a call] for hours, not even speaking. It's a way for us to feel like we're not so far apart."

Naturally, Bior is in the group chats. "I'm the only boy, so I get along with all the girls, so I just fit in perfectly with everyone."

"Oh yeah, don't forget that part," interjects Adut. "You're spoiled," she says, gently teasing. "But I'm just so happy he's grown up in a household of women, because I don't think that there are any better teachers in this world than women. He's grown up to be such a good, respectable, well-mannered young man."

No doubt he's had the right examples to follow. Adut, a long-time champion of diversity who has called out discrimination, has young women of colour regularly reaching out to acknowledge her contribution in establishing a more inclusive definition of beauty. "She's a very good big sister. I look up to her as a role model, so she just always helps me with everything. She always broke her back at work trying to provide for us when we were younger," Bior says. Adut, who bought her mum a house following her modelling success and is paying for her siblings' school fees, looks down with a smile and hugs her arms around herself as he's paying her these compliments. "She's always been there for me."

"He asked for my advice once about a girl, like one time," she says, breaking the moment with a laugh. "I wish he would ask me more, because I have very good advice to give … I just want to help everybody and I want to fix everybody's problems." Which extends to her network overseas; her idea of family extending across continents, beyond blood ties. "I say hi to everyone," she says of being on a job. "I come as my happy, bubbly self. That's how I carry myself in my job and in my industry."

When Enninful met Adut in 2018, he says, not only did he recognise something special in her as a model talent, but a shared affinity with her and returns the familial descriptor: "She is like my fashion daughter. I knew from that very first moment just how exceptional she is," he says. "Her devotion to family is unmatched. She will cross continents every month to see them and maintain the connections that keep her so grounded. I saw that solid background in her straight away: it's the quality that drives her and made her the wonderfully successful woman she is today."

Has her fashion family met her home family? "My little sister Alakiir, she's met Edward and Naomi, and my older sister, Winniy, she's met them." Bior hasn't yet. "Hopefully soon he will get to meet Edward and Pierpaolo and Naomi," she says.

Adut has no doubt he could have a modelling career if he wants it. "I definitely wasn't that confident when I did my first shoot. He did pretty good. I mean, I think he gets a little intimidated by me, so he tries not to mess up."

"She gives me inspiration to do better," says Bior. "Modelling is definitely an option and I enjoy it and I could see myself doing it, but I also play soccer, so I want to pursue that," he adds. Adut is ever the supportive older sister. "He's really good at soccer. I have never seen somebody more dedicated to something. I know he'll make it somewhere one day. I truly believe that. I see it for him." When he slips off camera, she continues: "He's very, very caring, and he always wants to diffuse whatever situation – whatever fight – whatever it is. And I admire that about him so much."

Bior is currently finishing school, but after he graduates, he wants to stay with Adut in LA. She is similarly set on expanding her world; writing, acting and design are what interests her. And broadening her family, too. "I want to have a big family. I want to have kids, I want my kids to have siblings. It's just the closeness," she says. Taking family with her, involving them in everything she does, brings her the most happiness. "Every time I do something, I always have my siblings in the back of my mind, no matter what it is."

Bior returns onscreen. "I don't know what I would do in this life without him. Even though he's younger than me, I feel like I have a big brother – now that he's taller than me – and it's just so special. I love this kid so much." It's obvious they share more than mutual respect and a deep love. Statuesque, he has her innate grace. Both are a tumble of never-ending limbs and they are very obviously kin. He shares her lissom glide but, unbelievably, given she is 5 foot 10 inches, trumps her in height. Sibling rivalry? "I'm better at soccer," notes Bior. Adut allows it. They agree she's better at modelling. For now. They both smile. ■

Adut wears a LOEWE dress, $8,550, and shoes, $2,800. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. Her own earrings. Bior wears a LOEWE top, P.O.A. ZEGNA pants, $1,995. VAN CLEEF & ARPELS ring, $13,400.

JOSH HSOT

Bior wears a NIQUE top, $170. PASPALEY necklace, P.O.A. Adut wears an ALEXANDER McQUEEN dress, $10,885. PASPALEY earrings, $2,280, and necklace, $28,800. Her own earrings.

JOSH OLINS

JOSH OLINS

Opposite page: Adut wears a LOEWE dress, $8,550. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. Her own earrings. Bior wears a LOEWE top, P.O.A. ZEGNA pants, $1,995.
This page: Adut wears a SAINT LAURENT dress, $8,045.
Beauty note: Estée Lauder Bronze Goddess Highlighting Powder Gelée in Heatwave.

Adut wears a RICK OWENS dress, $7,945. MIU MIU shoes, $1,890. Bior wears a RICK OWENS gown, $2,935, top, $2,270, and shorts, $780. PASPALEY necklace, $4,780. HERMÈS sandals, $1,375.

Bior wears an HERMÈS shirt, $3,590, shorts, $1,265, and belt, $1,585. Adut wears an HERMÈS top, $7,095, and pants, $8,670. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. Her own earrings.

JOSH OLINS

OMOIL
LUBRICANTS

Opposite page: Bior wears a NIQUE top, $170. PROENZA SCHOULER skirt, $3,375. PASPALEY necklace, P.O.A. Adut wears an ALEXANDER McQUEEN dress, $10,885. PASPALEY earrings, $2,280. LOEWE shoes, $2,800. Her own earrings.
This page: HERMÈS jumpsuit, $9,500. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600.

JOSH HOLINS

Adut wears a CHRISTIAN DIOR bra, $2,900, skirt, $9,400, and shorts, $2,300. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. PASPALEY bracelet, $9,480. Her own earrings. Bior wears a DIOR MEN jacket, $4,800, and pants, $2,700. PASPALEY necklace, $28,800.

Adut wears a PRADA dress, $4,550. TIFFANY & CO. earrings, $6,600. PASPALEY bracelet, $9,480. Her own earrings. Bior wears a BURBERRY shirt, P.O.A., and pants, $1,890. PASPALEY earrings, $2,280, and necklace, $28,800.

Hair: Sophie Roberts
Make-up: Kellie Stratton
Manicure: Cindy Vellis
Set design: Sophie Fletcher
Shot on location at Dovecote, New South Wales

JOSH QUINS
OPPOSITE: SUN STOOLS
FROM TAMSIN JOHNSON

Shannon Abloh wears a Canary Yellow shirt.

Keeping Virgil

On a freezing morning in Chicago, Shannon Abloh – wife of the late visionary designer Virgil Abloh – joined *Vogue* Australia's Christine Centenera to talk about securing the legacy of one of fashion's most creative forces.

CHRISTINE CENTENERA: "You have already done one interview, right?"
SHANNON ABLOH: "Mm-hmm."
CC: "She just started with *The New York Times*. You know, no big deal."
SA: [Laughs].
CC: "I'm very grateful you are doing this. I've known you for a long time and we are both similar in that we like to be a bit behind the scenes. I've observed you as a mother, a partner and a friend, and just as a general solid type of person, so I can't imagine that being thrust into the limelight like this is the easiest or the most comfortable thing."
SA: "Yeah."
CC: "I think everyone knows this, but you and Virgil were college sweethearts, right?"
SA: "High school … I was a junior [year 11] and he was a senior [year 12]. When he knew he was going into architecture school, he got into IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology] and we moved to the city. At the time I was like, I'm moving to Chicago! But if he were to have gotten into RISD [Rhode Island School of Design], I would have moved there too, you know?"
CC: "We really want this interview to be about what you have put in place in Virgil's honour, his short life's work and what he was aiming for in everything he did. I have these moments all the time of looking back and thinking, oh yeah, that's what he was doing … Do you know what I'm trying to say?"
SA: "Yeah. When I think of it, I think of it in two different ways. Cosmically, I think of it like: God knew how much he could bring to the world and gave him the ability to put things out as fast as he was able to and to touch so many people in such a short period of time. And then I also think of it as like: he just loved being out and seeing the world, he was able to be so incredibly moved by what he saw."
CC: "Knowing Virgil from the beginning, he always had that innate drive and ambition to make things happen."
SA: "He made everything happen for himself. Like when he was told 'no' – you know, you saw it. He would go around to the side door and figure it out. And if it was something he was adamant about doing, which was basically everything that he did [laughs], he would just find a way to do it." →

Styled and photographed by Christine Centenera.

Above: Prada jacket. **Right**: Cartier bracelets. Her own jewellery.

CC: "I had this moment where I was watching him on a panel at a Nike event in New York in 2017. I turned up and there were people lined up for six blocks and it was really hard to get in, and there was this packed room and he was up there talking. And it was my moment of realisation his impact and popularity had jumped to another level; of just how big he'd become. It was this exponential growth fuelled by the amount of work he had put in and from there it was off … and he never really changed."
SA: "He would do crazy flights just so he could get home to be with me and the kids. He would get the last flight he could take out, and then he would stay up and take the first flight back home to see the kids before school or be there when they got home from school."
CC: "It was the reason he did everything, actually. So he could get home to see you guys."
SA: "He would always talk about how he just kind of wanted to disappear. You know, still do work, but not have this public persona."
CC: "This is only the second interview you have done. How are you adjusting to being out there in the public eye? The more you do it, the easier it becomes?"
SA: "No. [Laughs.] [But] there are specific things I'll do that are important."
CC: "Anything that protects his legacy and pushes it forward?"
SA: "Yeah, I'll do it."
CC: "But anyone who wants to pry, is that off limits?"
SA: "Yeah. Because it's a bit draining … I'm using a lot of this as my grief work. There is so much work that goes into creating your life after you lose someone so close."
CC: "Are you finding strength from doing all this?"
SA: "Yeah."
CC: "I remember you saying that after he passed, it was almost like you were living outside of your own body … you were having to make decisions and you were in those early stages of shock."
SA: "Sometimes I still find myself in shock, because grief is like waves. Sometimes I'm like, I'm okay, I can function, I can take my kids to school, I feel like I can be involved in my life. And then some days, I'm like, woah, he is never coming back."
CC: "Tell me about Virgil Abloh Securities and the Virgil Abloh Foundation."
SA: "This is all stuff that he and I never spoke specifically about because he passed away so suddenly. You know Virgil, in every other aspect we are talking about, he was not going to die."
CC: "He was so optimistic."
SA: "Unfortunately, we never talked about what he would have wanted … I knew where he wanted to go with everything, and everything he was working on. I knew the goals he wanted. So with Securities … I use it as taking everything he created and putting it in this actual [place] – I'm securing it. No one can come and take from it without it going through me. And then with the foundation, the work that he started doing more publicly after George Floyd … He loved helping kids and I do as well, and a month after he passed I was like, we need to start a foundation and start giving back in a bigger way." →

CHRISTINE CENTENERA

"Sometimes I still find myself in shock, because grief is like waves. Sometimes I'm like, I'm okay, I can function, I can take my kids to school, I feel like I can be involved in my life. And then some days I'm like, woah, he is never coming back"

Dolce & Gabbana jacket. Prada dress. Alaïa shoes.

"My goal for the archive is in five years to have probably a 20,000 to 30,000-foot private museum. And then a space that is a kind of workspace with his things, and maybe we'll do workshops, or his friends, if they are in town, can work from there and be surrounded by his things and get inspiration from everything he did"

CC: "Joel [Edgerton, my partner] is involved in this charity for young Black women in Virginia called Girls For A Change, and I asked Virgil to say hi to these kids and talk to them. I know Virgil is super time-poor but he ended up staying two hours with them. He sat and listened and was genuinely interested."
SA: "He really cared. He did it so much through his career, but he didn't talk about it because he thought he didn't have to. The work kind of showed for itself, you know?"
CC: "Do you find yourself being surprised by what you have picked up from him? Because he was so good and helpful with advice. He was the one who encouraged me to take this job at *Vogue* Australia. I remember him saying to me, 'You of all people can find a way to do this and do it properly.'"
SA: "He was so good with that. I always laughed because I am the one who has a business degree and [he] had never taken a business class in his life, and [he was] way better at it than 99 per cent of people I know … Personally, I'm in a hard place just because losing Virgil – he was my life since I was 17. You lose your sense of self. So I'm trying to find confidence in myself all the time."
CC: "Can I tell you from someone who has known you for a really long time – I'm so proud of you, because what you have been through is the worst thing that can happen to someone and to see you navigate this with such grace … I don't know many people who would have that strength."
SA: "Yeah, I think about him a lot in those scenarios for sure. When I'm like, I really wanna fall apart today, but that's really not what he wants from me. He wants me to be at the kids' school volunteering with a smile on my face. I haven't spent the day in bed once since he left, and I would really love to. Just be like, you know what? I can't do today. But I think about him every morning when I wake up, and he would want me to be out there, and he would want me to be with you."
CC: "For sure, he would want you powering through … He had such a good eye. Everything he did in the Louis Vuitton office was always recorded for his personal archive. Even Australian T-shirts I had – whether it was a *Vogue* Fashion's Night Out T-shirt or something from Kym Ellery – he would say, 'Can I have one? I need it for my archive.' So I wonder, what is the scale of this archive?"
SA: "There was a huge warehouse in Paris, 13 storage units in Chicago, and then there is an art storage there, some stuff in New York or London. It was kind of spread out. He started archiving when he was getting his masters; it goes [back] to him being 22. I used to call him a squirrel, because he would take things away and he would squirrel them into our apartments."
CC: "What part of the process are you at?"
SA: "Everything has been documented and now we are at the phase of actually starting the archive as far as organising things. My goal for the archive is in five years to have probably a 20,000 to 30,000-foot private museum. And then a space that is a kind of workspace with his things, and maybe we'll do workshops, or his friends, if they are in town, can work from there and be surrounded by his things and get inspiration from everything he did. It's also for my kids, because they are so young. [Our son] Gray was three when he was diagnosed; he will know his dad from photos … So it is really important for me. And I haven't even started what he took with his iPhone. He took photos on his iPhone all day long, and so that stuff has been backed up and organised, but I haven't even thought about what that could possibly be. "
CC: "How many phones did he have?"
SA: "Oh my god." [Laughs]
CC: "I have a lot of phones, but he had so many. What's one thing you remember about him? I remember how nice he was. That no matter what, he was kind, and if he didn't have time for something I never heard him be rude, or yell at someone, or disrespect someone, and that is rare."
SA: "He was thoughtful about people, and people's feelings. He understood that you get a lot further in life with how you treat people, and I think it is a testament to how he was raised as well. His parents, they care about people, and are thoughtful about people, and that was instilled in him as he grew up."
CC: "Let's finish on this idea of legacy …"
SA: "Through the foundation, I want to give opportunities to kids as young as 10 years old, just introducing them to an art class, because research shows that in under-served communities kids are talked out of taking art classes or being creative because they are [told] it's not an option. And I want there to be a steady stream of people who look like Virgil to continue to get to his level. It's saying, 'This is an option for you,' and I just want to be able to help kids to be able to do that. Think of all the creative minds out there that need to be fostered and given an opportunity."
CC: "When we were sitting in the car after the first LV show, I was in the front, you and Virgil were in the back. Virgil was crying and everyone was emotional. I remember saying to him, 'I don't know if you are crying because you are sad, but what you just achieved out there was a culturally defining moment. I just hope you're upset because you're overcome with emotion.' I also remember he was just so natural with Instagram. I labour over it so much and torture myself over it, and he was so fast and would lecture me about it all the time and say, 'You need to do it; people want to see.' He made it look so effortless and easy, because it *was* for him – to communicate with the world in that way. I remember he posted in that moment in the back of the car 'You can do it too'. And that's the message of this whole foundation and his legacy. If there's one line that sums up what he hopes to continue it's instilling those few words into young kids: 'You can do it too.'" ■

CHRISTINE CENTENERA

Wardrobe.NYC jacket.
Hair: Alex Brown. Make-up: Shannon O'Brien.

Clean break

Distill, distill, distill – that was the message designers whispered, not shouted, with the return of an ultra-minimal mien.

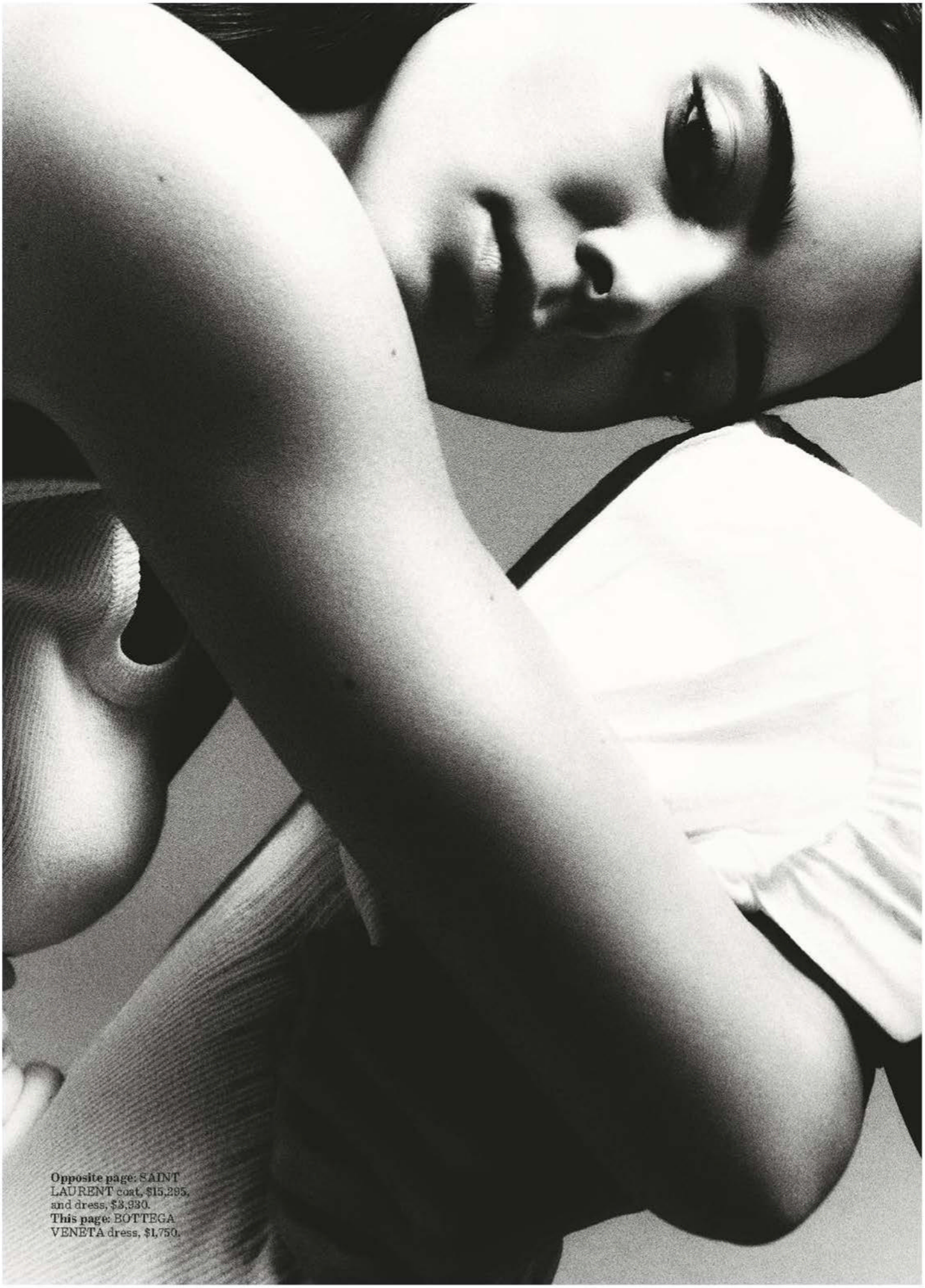
Styled by Kate Phelan. Photographed by Robin Galiegue.

Opposite page:
SUNSPEL top, $105.
MAX MARA skirt, $1,725.
This page: FERRAGAMO
top, $1,590. All prices
approximate; details at
Vogue.com.au/WTB.

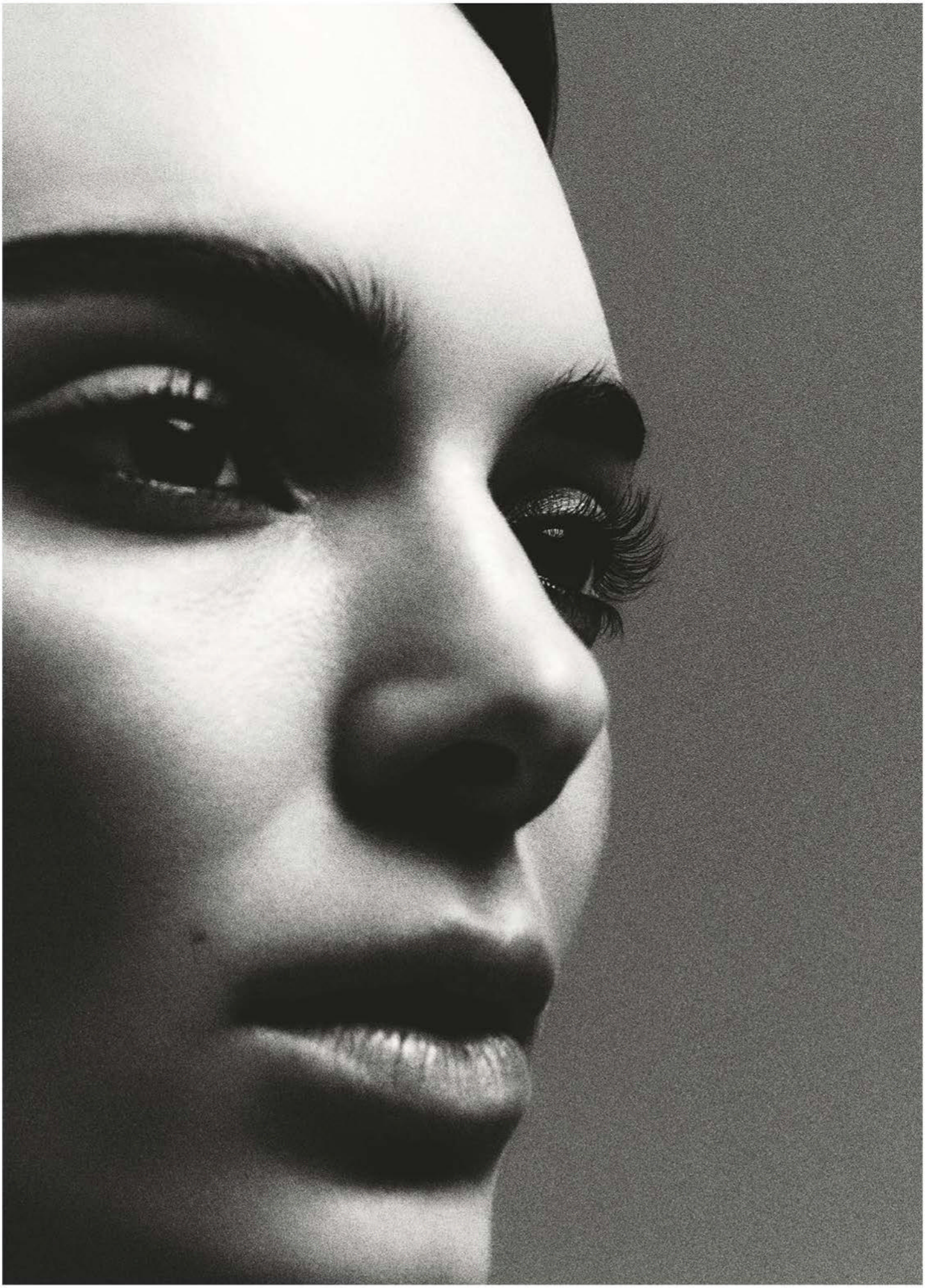
Opposite page: ANN DEMEULEMEESTER top, $570, and dress, $1,605.
This page: CHRISTIAN DIOR coat, $7,500.

ROBIN GALIEGUE

ROBIN GAIGUE



Opposite page: SAINT LAURENT coat, $15,295, and dress, $3,930. **This page:** BOTTEGA VENETA dress, $1,750.



ROBIN GALIEGUE

FENDI top, $1,980, and skirt, $2,490.

ROBIN GALIEGUE

Opposite page: PRADA sheer jacket, $1,180, and jacket, worn underneath, $4,300. R13 boots, P.O.A.
This page: LOEWE dress, $3,450, and jacket, $6,100.

Hair: Lucas Wilson
Make-up: Sam Visser
Manicure: Yoko Sakakura
Set design: Steven Valdez
Production: Farago Projects
Model: Kendall Jenner

Holding the line

So-called nepo babies are here to stay, generating chatter with every move, nowhere more so than in fashion. So what does the ubiquity of those with a famous lineage say about them, but more importantly, us? Lynn Yaeger takes a level-headed look among the clamour.

Famous offspring on the runway, from left, Gigi Hadid at Stella McCartney spring/summer '23, Lourdes Leon for Marine Serre spring/summer '23, Iris Law at Alexandre Vauthier haute couture spring/summer '23, Kendall Jenner at Proenza Schouler spring/summer '23, Lila Moss walks for Jacquemus in 2022.

Picture, if you will, an endless runway winding its way from New York to London, Milan to Paris. Marching down this heavenly avenue are hundreds, maybe thousands, of models, many just as beautiful as beautiful can be, but a handful who have tread a very different path to reach the catwalk.

What this cast of characters has in common, apart from their enthusiasm for donning clothes and walking the walk, is their provenance. In every case, from Gigi to Kendall, Kaia to Lourdes, they won the luck lottery because one, or maybe even both of their parents, were similarly golden children, enjoying the perks that superior DNA, or fame and fortune, can bestow.

If you look closely at what our fantasy mannequins are wearing, you will observe that each and every one of them is clad in an ensemble designed by someone whose parents, and sometimes grandparents, founded the house where their progeny now holds the reigns.

There has been lots of chatter lately about these so-called nepo babies, some of it unduly harsh – can you help who your parents are? – some of it engendered by the frankly foolish statements of the nepos themselves, stirring controversy in the past year.

Who can fault us if we are just a bit teeny bit resentful when life is so patently unfair? While you are practically breaking your leg trying to kick the door in, nepos are gliding right through on angel's wings. But guess what? This entire situation is our fault. We worship celebrity, so when anyone with even the most tangential connection to a famous person is lifted above the fray and becomes the subject of fascination and adoration, is it any wonder we've an endless appetite for seeing these folks on runways or fronting ad campaigns?

But if we peek under that Stephen Jones veil for a moment, and review the current situation, we are forced to conclude that there is something glaringly wrong with this state of affairs – it just isn't, well, modern. Remember how besotted we were only recently with the whole idea of nontraditional casting – expanding our view of what is "beautiful", embracing a glorious diversity, widening the lens to include many different versions of perfection? If we are indeed serious about embracing the human form in all its splendid variety, why should it matter who someone's pretty parents are?

Of course, it isn't just models who benefit from this sartorial version of the divine right of kings. Many of the most revered Italian fashion houses are also family affairs. There's Fendi for a start, in business for nearly a century. Today, Silvia Venturini Fendi, grandchild of the founders (and the inventor of the Baguette) is the company's artistic director of accessories and menswear. At Missoni, whose knitted stripes have been around since 1953, the company is in the hands of daughter Angela, her brother, Luca, and third-generationer Margherita. When a child strays, it's often not far; Carolina Castiglioni, whose mother founded Marni, now has her own brand, Plan C. The incomparable Simone Rocha, daughter of designer John, is a living example that sometimes the child grows up to rival the parent. (Think of Simone as the Liza Minnelli of fashion, and her dad as Judy Garland.)

Even when they struggle to break free, an invisible thread has been known to pull them back. Consider the case of Miuccia Prada, scion of the Prada family, once a leftist activist who studied political science at graduate school. The Communist Manifesto may have occupied her thoughts in those long-lost student days, but eventually she returned to the fold, writing a whole new playbook for the storied house.

Unlike models, nepo designers have not inherited stupendous looks, but rather they have design skills allegedly honed from the cradle and perfected at the breakfast table, so that by the time they grow up, they can execute a toile or set a sleeve with their hands tied behind their backs. If nepo models are sometimes slightly embarrassed by their privilege, the same cannot be said of nepo designers. They wear their legacies proudly, cloaked in words like heritage, tradition and legacy.

You could argue that this is all good – in an age when faceless behemoths are scarfing up fashion brands, obsessed with the bottom line, it's nice to have houses that preserve the unique qualities that made them special in the first place. With a family member in the picture, you don't see the kind of upheaval that has allowed, say, a brand like Givenchy to wander away from its original aesthetic roots. Versace, helmed by Gianni's sister Donatella, may be owned by US-based multinational conglomerate, but it still resembles Versace.

And ask yourself, is being a nepo baby in the fashion industry really that different from using your renown as a singer or an actor to try your hand at designing clothes? Oddly enough, this has sometimes turned out spectacularly well. Who could have imagined that the two toddlers playing Michelle Tanner on *Full House* would grow up to be the powerhouses behind The Row? Victoria Beckham is far better known now for her fashion line than her days as Posh Spice (and bonus points – her son Brooklyn is a nepo baby!). And we wait with eyes wide open to see what the appointment of visionary musical polymath Pharrell Williams as menswear creative director at Louis Vuitton will bring.

Which leaves us exactly where? Slightly ashamed of our fascination with fame-by-association, but with plenty of room in our hearts for Paloma Elsesser and Precious Lee, Winnie Harlow and Ashley Graham. So go ahead, gawk at those marquee names, but never forget that beauty and talent, charm, flair and energy, spring from the most unlikely places, and that genius has no regard for mere bloodlines.

If we are indeed serious about embracing the human form in all its splendid variety, why should it matter who someone's pretty parents are?

IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES COLLAGE: ARQUETTE COOKE

Family album

Woven through the arresting works by artist Thea Anamara Perkins are memories of her family, tales of past, present and future. Amy Campbell has an exclusive audience with the Arrernte and Kalkadoon painter as she receives the 2023 La Prairie Art Award.

Bondi Beach (2023) by Thea Anamara Perkins.

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ANKARA PERKINS AND ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Thea Anamara Perkins wears a BOTTEGA VENETA top, $6,800, jeans, $8,840, and boxer shorts, P.O.A. MEADOWLARK ring, on top, $360. CARTIER ring, $2,400. EMPORIO ARMANI shoes, $970.

Warren Ball Avenue (2023).

For the Arrernte people of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), the wet season is a vibrant time. When thunder begins to rumble on the horizon, the community knows that soon, dusty river beds will gurgle and gush with fresh water, and it is the cause of great celebration. "It's always this really big, momentous thing because it doesn't happen all the time," explains artist Thea Anamara Perkins, whose middle name, Anamara, refers to a river and Dreaming that runs north of Mparntwe, in the Central Desert Region. "But also, when a dry river bed fully runs, people can drown because it's really treacherous. It's much like the landscape – beautiful, but treacherous."

As the recipient of the second La Prairie Art Award, Perkins, an Arrernte and Kalkadoon woman with ties to Sydney's Redfern community, has created four works. The group, which can be seen on these pages, has been acquired by the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), where it is currently on display. One of the works depicts her Auntie Rachel, an acclaimed film director, and her late grandfather Charles Perkins, a well-known Indigenous civil rights activist and talented soccer player, wading through a creek bed at The Telegraph Station.

From 1932 until its closure in 1942, this was the site of a "half-caste" institution for Aboriginal children known as The Bungalow. Not only was Perkins's grandfather born at The Telegraph Station; he also rests there.

"We always return there when we go there, it's this nexus for my family," explains Perkins, as she opens an image of the work on her phone, and zooms in to showcase the detail. "So that's them looking very excited about being in the water, because it's such an arid place, and rain is such a precious thing."

True to Thea Anamara Perkins's signature style, this painting, which is titled *The Bungalow*, is based on a photograph from her family archive. So are the other works she's created as part of the $80,000 prize, which supports contemporary Australian women artists in the further development of their creative practice. The second work is a sunny, smiley portrait of Perkins's "Pop", uncle and mother, the art curator Hetti Perkins, on Bondi Beach in the 1970s, the third shows Charles holding a baby Hetti at his university graduation ceremony, while the final painting is of her sisters Maddy and Lille at a birthday party.

"The underlying thing that connects these works is this term that's used in psychology, it's called a 'glimmer', which is the opposite of a trigger," explains the artist, who is 31. "I've extended the idea of glimmer to 'shimmer'. It's this grain of inspiration, or a mood or feeling the image has. I've always been attracted to photographs, both for their beauty, but also →

(PORTRAIT) STYLING: HARRIET CRAWFORD. PHOTOGRAPH: JAMIE HEATH. HAIR: RORY RICE. MAKE-UP: CHERRY CHEUNG. IMAGES COURTESY OF THEA ANAMARA PERKINS AND ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

for the memories they prompt. It's this moment that's frozen in time, and there's this poetry to [photos] being inherently transient things that have been fixed." The photos she chose to paint for the 2023 La Prairie Art Prize symbolise belonging, safety, joy and connectedness, says Perkins. "My work is a reaction to the misinformation and misrepresentation I've seen of First Nations people and our families in the media. Painting, for me, is a way of taking charge of representation, but by leading with love, by showing my own experiences."

Storytelling has been a constant in Perkins's life. Not only does she hail from a dynasty of First Nations creatives; she's also part of a new generation of Perkinses, who are carrying the family legacy into the future and beyond. Her sisters Madeleine and Miah Madden are both actors, while Perkins's brother Tyson is a cinematographer. Growing up, Perkins wasn't just surrounded by art. She was encouraged by her mother, who was the curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art at the AGNSW from 1998 to 2011 and now a senior curator-at-large at the National Gallery of Australia, to think critically about its meaning.

"We would go and see paintings and I'd be like, 'Oh, I like that one,' and Mum would be like, 'Well, why do you like it?' We were encouraged to really deep-dive into the theory." She says drawing, and later painting, became a natural way of expressing herself.

Perkins started art school, but says the structure didn't suit her. "I really struggle when I try to do things in a premeditated way. I usually have an abstract idea of what I'm trying to say, but I like to effloresce an idea in the process." She hit her stride when she leant into her own style, which is imbued with a dreamlike quality. "Growing up, because of my family connections there, I had a big exposure to central desert art, which is really bold and dynamic."

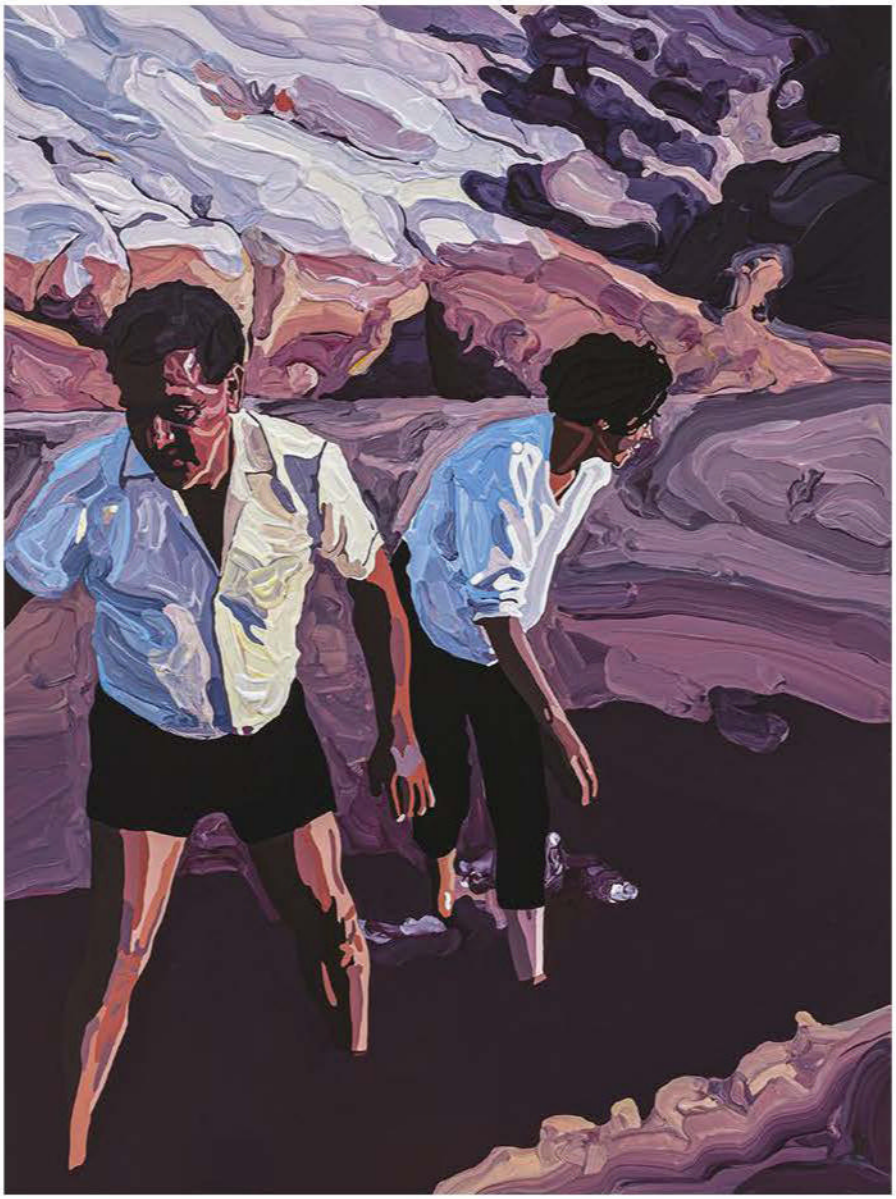
When she began to trust her intuition, the acclaim followed suit. Perkins was an Archibald Prize finalist in 2019, 2020 and 2021, the same year she won the Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship. In 2022, she was a finalist in the Wynne Prize, and late last year, she was commissioned by Carriageworks to create a large-scale mural. It was while painting *Stockwoman*, which watched over the space until February, that Perkins was informed she'd been selected the recipient of this year's La Prairie Art Award. "I stood there with my mouth open for the duration of the phone call," she recalls with a laugh. "I had no idea I was even in the mix."

While Perkins was shocked, the panel of judges agreed on the power of her ability to represent First Nations people and culture through a contemporary lens. "Thea's landscapes and portraiture speaks to an intrinsic connection to the land and a strong link to family, memories and time," says Rosi Fernandez, the managing director La Prairie Australia and New Zealand. "Thea's art is bold, authentic and considered, which are all traits we resonate with as a brand."

AGNSW senior curator Isobel Parker Philip echoes this sentiment. "Thea is an artist who is hitting her stride," she says. "Her paintings are quiet but powerful; she possesses a remarkable ability to capture and distil the particular emotional pull that is encoded in a family snapshot. While the photographs Thea works from record fleeting moments in time, her paintings

"I think art is an effective communicator, in that it is part of the truth-telling process. I really want to push my practice conceptually and technically, so that, hopefully, it contributes to what's happening in the world"

The Graduation (2023).



The Bungalow (2023).

convey a sense of reverence and care that lends them a solidity. Together, they create a temporal mosaic where memories fold back on themselves and the past is as alive as the present."

For Perkins, the impact the award will have on her career, both nationally and internationally, is still sinking in. The winner of the inaugural La Prairie Art Award, Melbourne-based artist and writer Atong Atem, recently expressed to *Vogue* Australia what the recognition had done for her, on both a personal and professional level. "It gave me this huge exposure that I wouldn't have otherwise had. As part of the award, I was able to travel around Switzerland [to Art Basel] and meet so many people, which has led to some really exciting exhibitions that are coming up internationally. It's also raised my profile here in Australia; it's really cemented my place in the art world."

Perkins, meanwhile, hopes to use the opportunities that come with the prize to continue making "good art". When asked what "good art" means to her, she gazes off into the distance, in search of her ideal rationale. "I think the definition of 'good' is very broad. But in my own little way … it's art that I think is really erudite and expressive."

These two words spring to mind in the presence of Perkins's work. Especially the paintings she has created for the La Prairie Art Award, which, at 30 by 40 centimetres, are "large enough that you can feel immersed in them, but also intimate enough that you're drawn in to look at the detail".

"I think art is an effective communicator, in that it is part of the truth-telling process. I really want to push my practice conceptually and technically, so that, hopefully, it contributes to what's happening in the world," says Perkins. "I want it to communicate with people and I want people to see the works and feel the emotion that's in them." ■

IMAGES COURTESY OF THEA ANAMARA PERKINS AND ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Clockwise from far left: Gaia Repossi as a young girl in Monte Carlo; aged 8 with a necklace from her father; with her mother in France; Repossi at home with her father near Monaco; age 7 with her grandfather; with her grandmother.

Self-portrait

Through her jewellery creations, Gaia Repossi is taking up the mantle of a family legacy, one beating with an understanding that high craft and considered creativity transcend their time. By Alison Veness. Portraits by Holly Gibson.

We are meeting at the Paris Ritz for tea. This is heartland Repossi territory. Gaia Repossi knows it well, having stayed here many times as a child; it is across the square from her Italian family's namesake jewellery store in Place Vendôme – under a minute stroll to be precise. There is a sense of certainty and calmness about her – perhaps driven by the two decades of decision-making and leading a team of creatives in a strong direction.

She has been creative director for the past 16 years – since she was 21. She is an only child and, in many ways, this role was her inescapable destiny, steering the maison into the 21st century with a certain quiet and determined conviction.

"I take my confidence from my father," she says of Alberto Repossi. "[He] in turn took it from his father, Costantino. My father is someone who never doubted himself, even in difficult moments and I'm the same. I think when you have this desire to create, nothing else matters – success, career, you do it. It's the duty, especially if you carry the name of your family – you have to do it."

Her grandfather opened the first Repossi store in the late 1950s in Turin in the northern Italian region of Piedmont. And then Monte Carlo came later, in 1979. Place Vendôme was opened by her father in 1986, the year she was born.

"It's the DNA of jewellery right here," she says of the location. "It's the only Place in the world that is just dedicated to jewellery stores. There's a small one in Monte Carlo, I believe, but this is the largest. So, when my father was able to open here, it was the real establishment of the house. That is something I really respect." Her grandfather was a modernist of his time – in a futuristic era. "He was a designer, a radical, the definition of what was modern. They were designing furniture and advertising campaigns, so it was the trendy →

Gaia Repossi in Place Vendôme, Paris.

Top: The N2 earrings, and above, in sketch form, inspired by traditional African earrings. **Left**: designing in progress. **Above right and below**: Repossi campaign and imagery from the jewellery tribute collection in collaboration with the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation by Chris Lensz (above right) and Martin de Palle (below).

job. It was the coolest thing you could do. So Turino, for me, is that chapter of the house. He would draw only at night, and I inherited the hand, so did my dad. We can draw. When I was a child, I wanted to be an artist, I wanted to paint. I was convinced – until this job took me over."

At 18, Repossi studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, obtaining an MA in Archaeology.

Her creative process begins with a sketch; this is where the magic begins. "What I do is an applied art. It involves a lot of perfection. It involves a timeless ambition as well, you're not here to design something that won't last," she says. She is attracted by the eccentricity, identity and the ancient language of jewellery. "I sketch with very precise references from architecture, antique or tribal jewellery – also revisiting and re-editing the classics is an important chapter for us."

Architecture is a critical influence. "It's an extra-large expression of a vision and it's extremely artistic," Repossi says. In 2016, she worked with Rem Koolhaas and OMA, redesigning the Place Vendôme store with the staircase becoming the most important part. "I love antique Greek architecture, too," she adds.

Repossi was introduced to the American artist Donald Judd's work a decade ago. "I started purchasing some furniture and I'm very attracted by the sculpture. If you look at my work, I relate with the repetition, the stacking, it has infinite possibilities, like architecture." She bought a couple of pieces of his legendary furniture that is still made today and can be ordered. "They're not like artworks, they're way more accessible, but you just have to wait. And once I received them, I started living with them and I was blown away. Then I went to Marfa, Texas [to the Judd Foundation], and there I realised this intention he had to be an architect himself – in addition to being an artist – because he wanted to do 360-degree living in his own aesthetic. I love how minimal and simple it is."

Repossi then collaborated with his architectural designer son, Flavin Judd, "who's a friend. He designed the store in Monte Carlo redesigning the interior."

Repossi in Place Vendôme in central Paris.

She is also a great admirer of Robert Mapplethorpe, having immersed herself in his work at the Foundation in New York and his extensive archive in LA. Working with her studio, a team of five, they eventually produced 15 designs inspired by this intensive research.

When her grandfather passed, he gifted her 1,000 drawings. "He used to hand draw; he was the perfectionist of the three of us," she says. "My grandfather kept creating until he was 86. He stopped drawing when my grandmother passed; he lived two years longer than her and then he stopped. He was an interesting character, very stubborn. He was a tough man. He was very proud. He had a strange relationship with my father, very competitive."

Repossi sketches in the morning during the design process. "They say with the internal clock, when you draw and make decisions, for artistic people is 11am. Apparently it's a good time to make decisions, I love drawing in the mornings and having the peace of the studio, arriving in my own time."

She looks up to the elegance and kindness of her father and is very close to him. "I worked with him for 11 years. We are almost the same person. I carry his dream. We are different but similar in many, many ways," she says. Her mother balances out all the inherent creativity, Repossi explains. "She is extremely social. She taught me how to dress. She is the one who most loves the Ritz and would appreciate us being here right now," she laughs. "At the same time, she is extremely down to earth. She just has this passion. She introduced me to Karl Lagerfeld, she introduced me to the elegance of certain clothes. She criticises me sometimes saying, 'You work in luxury. What is this neglected appearance?'"

Repossi has an innate modernity, with a masculine edge that sets her apart from the glitzy crowd mingling in the lobby. Today for our photographs, she is wearing Matthieu Blazy's Bottega Veneta faded leather blue jeans. "My mother always said, 'We already have jewellery, so wear less. No prints. Stay simple.' She is just way more feminine than me. I'm a bit of a hybrid because I love menswear. I look physically like my father, but as I'm growing, I feel more like my mum."

Her father designed jewellery for women, she says. "He had my mother as an inspiration. He always told me you have to be aware of flattering a woman. I like strange placements, but they will still be flattering." She gives the example of an earring that lengthens the neck through its composition. She sketches rings with the purpose of making the hands look elongated and elegant. Her newest obsession is the jaw earring – inspired by a traditional African earring from the 18th century. "The original African earring sticks up without needing a hole. You don't even clip to the earlobe it just has a space and you wear it. It is an amazing piece I found as an antique." The earring has a rare black base, a fusion of 18 carat gold and ruthenium set with diamonds that reaches across the entire earlobe – lengthening the jawline. It is epic.

While Repossi is single, she hopes to have her own family one day. Her days are full. "I practise yoga very early in the morning. I like that moment for myself. It's a very deep, relaxing stretch; it takes me about an hour. Probably my favourite moment."

If she could rewind to age 21, she has some advice for herself. "Protect yourself more. It's a strong industry. Very competitive. It's led by men mostly; it's led by people who mainly see profit," she says. Reflecting on the values that underpin the industry she works in ("extreme luxury"), she initially feared, and wasn't interested in them. But, she says, "I managed to float around it with my creativity. I'm very self-protected … Trust is something precious within yourself, but with others, too. When you're facing success young, you can be fragile," she contemplates. "I see it with a lot of friends in the industry – you have to be able to bounce back. There's a lot of criticism; gossip is around every form of success or failure."

And if she hadn't been born a Repossi, she says she might like to have been, "someone free from responsibilities. A free being." We leave to go out into Place Vendôme and already her mind is racing, thinking about what she has said. She smiles. We both know there is no escaping this level of natural creativity – it is the sweet spot, an incredible commitment. ■

PORTRAIT: HOLLY GIBSON.
CAMPAIGN IMAGES: MARTIN DE PALLE, CHRIS LENSZ

MICHAEL KORS COLLECTION dress, P.O.A. LEIGH MILLER earrings, $535. All prices approximate; details at Vogue.com.au/WTB.

IMAGE (OPPOSITE PAGE): OLAF HOLLAND/ADOBE STOCK

Eternal sunshine

Be transported by a wardrobe moving to the rhythm of island life: hot-tropic textures, cacophonous colour and dresses with slink for the fading heat.

Styled by Gabriella Karefa-Johnson.
Photographed by Nadine Ijewere.

LOUIS VUITTON
tank top, P.O.A.,
and pants, $9,150.

NADINE IJEWERE

BOTTEGA VENETA
top, $21,170, skirt, $16,490, earrings, $1,830, and shoes, $1,570.

Left: BOTTER dress, $425. HERMÈS sandals, $5,395. **Right**: LOUISA BALLOU dress, $1,085. HERMÈS sandals, $5,395.

NADINE IJEWERE

MARNI dress, $3,530. LEIGH MILLER earrings, $700. LOUISA BALLOU shoes, P.O.A.

ALTUZARRA
dress, P.O.A.
PANCONESI
necklace, $2,515.

NADINE IJEWERE

PRADA dress, $4,300, and shoes, $1,940. PANCONESI earrings, P.O.A.

THEOPHILIO X LEBLANC top, P.O.A. POLO RALPH LAUREN jeans, $400. GRAINNE MORTON earrings, $2,780.

ISABEL MARANT
top, $2,565.
VALENTINO
skirt, P.O.A.

NADINE IJEWERE

NADINE IJEWERE
IMAGE (THIS PAGE): GILLIAN VANN/ADOBE STOCK

DRIES VAN NOTEN
top, $565, and
dress, $1,995.

Hair: Joey George
Make-up: Yumi Lee
Models: Akon
Changkou, América
González, Kai Newman

Sibling revelry

Catering as installation art? Tableware with a sense of humour? The creations of Laila and Nadia Gohar have turned food-world self-seriousness delightfully on its head. By Tamar Adler.

Styled by Jorden Bickham. Photographed by Norman Jean Roy.

When I arrive just before the winter holidays at Laila and Nadia Gohar's office in New York's Chinatown – which they share with Laila's food and art company, LG Studio – Laila tells me that she and Nadia kind of imagine Gohar World, the Cairo-born sisters' 11-month-old line of cheeky and exquisite host- and tableware, as a planet. Laila is standing in a voluminous white Simone Rocha skirt and snub-nosed Gucci slides at an induction cooktop making studio lunch. (At least once a week, Laila's endearingly grandmotherly studio lunches can be glimpsed on Instagram. Today it's strozzapreti and potatoes.) "Or maybe a touring circus company," she offers, tipping water from a tomato can into her pot. "Especially when we go places, and there's food flying out of the car and highly toxic materials like shellac."

In Gohar World, already beloved for its satin-bowed baguette bags, Battenberg lace wine-bottle aprons and candles shaped like baskets of ricotta, everything is meticulously crafted, and a little droll. The designer Simone Rocha emails me: "I feel like they dress a table like they would dress in my clothes, which I love!" In Gohar World, tables wear starched collars and shirting, chandeliers hold eggs, and beans aren't a budget food, but so deeply loved that they're handpainted in Milan on Paravicini platters and printed in cheeky Kelly green on Gohar World packing tape. Laila and Nadia, small and sylph-like, are deeply entrenched in the carb-conscious world of fashion, but in Gohar World everyone eats pasta. "Everyone eats everything here," submits Laila, when I remark on it. "It's in the job description," says Nadia, 33, who is a finer boned, more reserved version of her older (by 13 months) sister. She has joined us, in a cerulean sweatshirt with a lace collar poking out and baggy boys' jeans, for lunch. This, I learn, is typical Nadia – ironic but good-natured. When I ask them to muse on the governance of the imaginary planet, Gohar World, Nadia replies, "I think the government is beans."

After lunch – which is delicious and eaten by all the Gohar World citizens in the studio today, including the florist Miguel Yatco, graphic designer Monica Magsanoc, and studio manager Yukimi Nate ("Yukimi does literally everything," I'm told) – Laila begins an afternoon of design meetings for Gohar World's next collection. Nadia has to skip this to receive Gohar World holiday deliveries – cardboard boxes full of candles shaped like flan and cauliflower from Italy, chicken-feet necklaces of natural pearl from Vietnam, and other whimsical, handcrafted items for the table. Nadia's absence is the source of considerable, recognisably familial, bickering. As I leave the studio, I mention having recorded some of the design meeting. Nadia remarks: "Oh, that's great. I'll know what happened." →

Sisters Nadia (left) and Laila Zohar, co-founders of tableware line Gohar World. Nadia wears a DRIES VAN NOTEN shirt, $530. CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY bracelets, $12,550 each, from the Chanel boutiques. CARTIER bracelet, $60,500. Laila wears a POLO RALPH LAUREN shirt, $189. Her own jewellery.

Chef Ignacio Mattos – known for his own tendency toward artful presentation at his New York restaurants Estela, Altro Paradiso, Lodi, and, most recently, Corner Bar, and who has been dating Laila for nearly three years – tells me of the sisters: "The two of them are very in sync. Even if they're extremely different. They have a complicity with each other. They disagree all the time, but they're incredibly close and incredibly loyal. They have each other's back."

Laila is the more extroverted. She's been in the public eye for a decade, via her large-scale edible installations commissioned for openings by fashion houses from Cartier to Hermès to Prada (these evolved out of the catering company, Sunday Supper, she started 12 years ago). Laila is voluble, speaking in long, deeply felt soliloquies, punctuated by strong declarations: "I hate nostalgia. It's annoying." Nadia just moved to New York last February from Toronto, where she spent years working as a successful painter. (Nadia has had multiple solo and group shows and artist residencies. She continues to paint in New York. "Now it's lots of red on canvas," she says.)

The sisters conceived of Gohar World together, through long conversations between Toronto and New York, with a clear idea of what they wanted to make. Behind the scenes, Nadia is known to be unwavering. Mattos affirms this: "Nadia has very strong opinions, and ways of making her point come across, but it's a lot more subtle."

I meet the sisters for lunch the next day inside the bright and airy Corner Bar, which Mattos opened last year at Nine Orchard, the new Lower East Side hotel inhabiting the former Jarmulowsky Bank. Laila is early, standing outside the restaurant and texting, in a men's button-down and barn jacket, both several sizes too big. "I'm lurking," she laughs. She waves to the staff as we're seated in a sunny corner booth. Soon after, Nadia arrives, wearing a vintage Fiorucci sweatshirt and a Mattos Hospitality hat, which Laila finds hilarious: "They're going to think you work here!"

We order – salades niçoise for Nadia and me and a club sandwich for Laila – and I ask them to tell me about their childhoods. Laila and Nadia attended an international school in Cairo, where they were raised by parents with an 18-year age difference. "My dad was my mom's journalism teacher," Laila says. Their father, Mohamed Gohar, was a prominent photojournalist, and one-time personal photographer for President Anwar Sadat. Their mother, Nevin, raised the sisters at home.

Mohamed and Nevin modelled the kind of synchronous yin and yang equanimity I've observed in Laila and Nadia. "They're opposites. My dad is really outside the box," Nadia says. "He was, like, the class dad, and the class clown. Our mother was more conventional." The sisters themselves were always simultaneously entwined and divergent – both drawn to crafts and other creative pursuits. Nadia drew and painted. "And I collected rocks," she tells me. "Even though we had the same upbringing and we're one year apart and we're always really close," Laila says, "I was kind of rebellious and uncomfortable as a little kid. Nadia was popular. She was on the honour roll." ("No, I wasn't," Nadia protests. "Yes, you were!")

There are two more Gohar siblings, Nour and Janna, who are 10 years younger than Laila and Nadia. "We're the most similar in terms of sensibility. We were raised together. I also think that, when you have kids so many years apart, you're a different person, you know?" says Laila. "Our two younger siblings are more practical." (Nour works in film and sound production in Toronto and Janna as a graphic designer in Paris.) →

The sisters in Laila's Manhattan apartment. Nadia (left) wears a DRIES VAN NOTEN shirt, $530. CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY bracelets, $12,550 each, from the Chanel boutiques. CARTIER bracelet, $60,500. Her own other jewellery and socks. Laila wears a POLO RALPH LAUREN shirt, $189. Her own jewellery and shoes.

NORMAN JEAN ROY

A range of items from GOHAR WORLD's line, including a serving plate, mother-of-pearl bean dish, and spoon.

Opposite page: "Everything that we do, we're going to do it in our way," says Laila (right), who wears a TORY BURCH coat, P.O.A. PRADA dress, $6,600, and sweater, $1,750. Nadia wears a BOTTEGA VENETA dress, $25,770. Their own jewellery, bags and shoes.

Hair: Anton Alexander
Make-up: Romy Soleimani
Production: The Canvas Agency

Laila and Nadia's maternal grandmother, Nabila, was, and remains, a huge influence on both of them. "We joke that she's my real mother," Nadia says. "She's kind of our third partner," Laila adds, "our man on the ground there." The linens in Gohar World collections are made in Cairo, along with the company's wrought iron. "We still call my grandmother to ask where to get things made," Nadia says.

Nabila was, for years, a professional dressmaker. "When our grandfather was in the army," says Laila, "our grandmother bought sewing machines and started a studio of women who would design and make clothing and sell it to shops." As tweens, the sisters would spend hours at their grandmother's atelier, where Nabila would bootleg American styles for them. "We wanted these jeans that had silkscreened flowers with smiley faces and peace signs," remembers Nadia. They told their grandmother they needed them. "She was like: 'I know the guy!'" Nadia remembers.

Nabila replicated the jeans, but with one exaggeration. "I remember her drawing them with the chalk pen thing that you draw on fabric with," recalls Laila. "And she drew it out, flared. And I was like, 'No, Grandma, *more*.' And I took the chalk, and drew it really big." The sisters still rely on Nabila to find artisans and materials in Egypt.

Over lunch, they show me a video of their grandmother describing their vision for Gohar World host gloves – $55 rubber dishwashing gloves with hand-sewn, starched-lace-trimmed cuffs – to a Cairo artisan named Yasser. In Arabic, she explains how the lace cuffs will be sewn on, and then says, in English, "Fantastic," to which Yasser nods, saying, "Funky." Nabila sewed every satin bow that adorns every Gohar World baguette bag. "She sent them to us in a suitcase," Laila says.

I find myself wondering, aloud, how it is that Gohar World's objects, which might come across as kitschy or frivolous, don't. "The humour is the saving grace, I think," says Laila. "Because if it wasn't funny – if we took all these things really seriously – I think it would be so obnoxious. The whole idea is that there are these objects that sort of add a little bit of beauty, but also, like, a little humour. They're not necessities." Nadia interjects: "Paper chicken slippers, though" – which they sell for the drumsticks of your roast chicken – "your life depends on." Nadia adds: "Also, we're not annoying. That's a big thing."

Indeed, Laila's and Nadia's profound good nature, and their authenticity, may be one of the truest explanations for Gohar World's success. Rocha tells me: "What I admire about them both is that this is so natural to them. It's genuinely their world – from creating installations, to having friends eat supper on the street at their studio" – which they did during the worst of the pandemic – "to producing their products with family. It's all connected and all authentic." Dries Van Noten, whose LA store hosted a Gohar World pop-up shop called House of Gohar last December, has high praise. "It was a close collaboration, and working with Laila, Nadia and the Gohar World team was a true delight." Gohar World employees are similarly devoted. The florist Miguel mirthfully recalls the Gohar World launch, at Rockefeller Center, last May, for which he hand-sculpted life-sized topiaries and adorned them, respectively, with potatoes and turnips, and 2,000 fresh cherries. Studio manager Yukimi, who splits her time between Laila's private art-and-food pursuits and Gohar World, laughed to me about sewing a picnic blanket for a project of Laila's that was more than 65 square metres. "It took me and my husband two hours just to

NORMAN JEAN ROY

fold," she marvels. This also reflects the sisters' own work ethic. They had both flown on a red-eye from Los Angeles the day before our interviews. After cooking us studio lunch, Laila had scoured her own induction cooktop, twice. Kim Hastreiter, co-founder of *Paper* magazine, who knows Laila better of the two sisters, says bluntly: "Laila works like a dog."

In its first year of life, Gohar World has grown considerably. It launched globally, and has already earned back the sisters' original investment. In addition to its collaboration with Dries Van Noten, Gohar World made a capsule collection for Gucci Vault. The company is designing barware for Marriott's Luxury Collection hotels in Tokyo, Paris and Los Angeles, and is planning its third Gohar World table collection, for which Nadia will travel to Cairo. I ask whether the company's growth has taken them by surprise. Laila answers: "I'm not really surprised. It's grown in the way that it's grown not by coincidence – but because we grew it. I was satisfied with what I was doing before this. So I thought, 'If I do this, I want it to be, like, a world.'" Nadia adds: "I think we're at this point where we're five people or something. If we had more people, I know it could just, like, combust." (Laila interjects: "Combust is a bad thing. It means explode." Nadia: "I kind of use it in a good way.")

Laila is also pregnant with her first child with Mattos, due in May. I ask if she plans to keep working. "Yes, of course," is her immediate answer. But she adds: "I definitely want to take off some time. But it's good, because that's when things get slower for us." Nadia – who adamantly demurs when I try to pry into her romantic life – disagrees. "Okay, fine, not then, but in August it gets slower." In the meantime, the plan is to expand. So far, Gohar World has been self-funded. "This works when Yasser is making 500 units," says Laila, "but if Yasser needs to make 20,000 units, there needs to be a whole network of people who are led by Yasser." Nadia chimes in: "That's a big future plan. It could even be tomorrow. It's not that far ahead." Laila and Nadia are starting to talk about raising money, which they plan to in 2023. "But I think, like everything that we do, we're going to do it in our way. It's not going to be in this, like, techy way," Laila says.

Fundraising poses less of a barrier than the prospect of more time on computer screens. Both Laila and Nadia are devotedly analog, esteeming work done by hand and what Nadia calls "the materiality of things". "I mean we obviously use technology. We're an online business," says Laila.

But Nadia has her phone set up to ring as a landline when she's in her apartment. Gohar World also has a no-Zoom policy. There is some irony to this – the company has 46K Instagram followers; Laila has 260K – which the sisters acknowledge. "I'm a person living in 2023. I, like, whatever, do the thing. But I just don't want to be staring at the screen all day. And I don't want to be communicating with everyone through a screen. So I'm just gonna figure out how to do it in a different way."

As we finish our coffees, Laila recounts leaving their studio the other day and hearing their operations director, Kieran Turner, say the word Slack – meaning the group texting app common to the kinds of companies that use terms like "teams" and "one-on-ones" and "all hands on deck". "Obviously not in reference to us," she says. "I told Kieran, 'Oh, god, I hope we never have to use Slack.' And he said, 'We will.'" Laila sighs. "I guess, but I hope that we never have to use Slack. And that everybody eats carbs no matter how big we get." ■

Fringe colour

Throw out the rule book and take a painterly approach to application.

Lip sync

Blend tonal lipstick hues and glossy sheens for an ombre effect, even adding a cream eyeshadow for a little extra shimmer.

The technique of the moment? Contrast layered colour and matt textures with shine.

PHOTOGRAPHS ZHONG LIN MAKE-UP VALENTINA LI

WORDS: KATRINA ISRAEL HAIR: PIERRE SAINT SEVER MODELS: XIE CHAOYU, ZHANG PENG ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

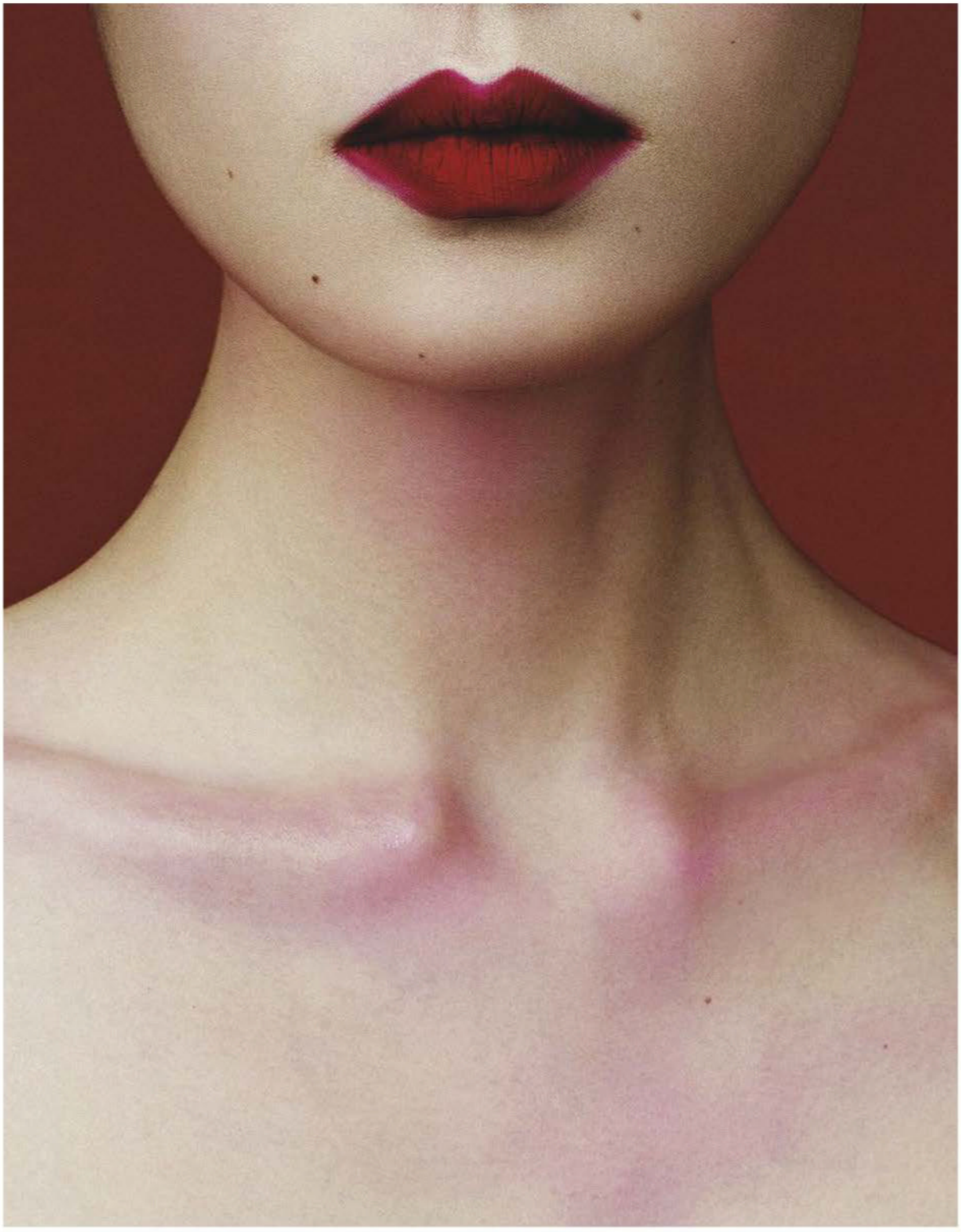
Opposite page: CHANEL Rouge Allure Velvet lipstick in 53 Inspirante, $65. CHANEL Rouge Allure Velvet lipstick in 56 Rouge Charnel, $65. CHANEL Le Crayon Lèvres Longwear Lip Pencil in 178 Rouge Cerise, $55. **This page**: (Top lip) CHANEL Rouge Allure Velvet lipstick in 71 Rupturiste, $65. CHANEL Rouge Coco Gloss Moisturizing Glossimer in Icing, $53. (Bottom lip) CHANEL Rouge Allure Velvet lipstick in 71 Rupturiste, $65. CHANEL Ombre Première Longwear Cream Eyeshadow in 810 Pourpre Profond, $55. CHANEL Le Crayon Lèvres Longwear Lip Pencil in 186 Berry, $55.

Punk peepers

Dabble in theatrics with hyperbolic colour. Start by defining below the eye in a striking hue before adding artistic swatches of complementary intense pigments.

This page: YVES SAINT LAURENT BEAUTY Couture Colour Clutch Eyeshadow Palette in Saharienne, $165. YVES SAINT LAURENT BEAUTY Dessin Des Sourcils Brow Pencil in Ebony, $60. **Opposite page**: MORPHE M2 Always Online Gel Liner & Sharpener in Fierce Fuchshia, $10. MORPHE 9H Hot For Hue Artistry Palette, $21.

ZHONG LIN
ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB



Collar canvas

Take your blush all the way down to the clavicles with a generous dusting of orchid pink or metallic rose powder that offers far more saturation (and impact) than a classic golden illuminiser.

Opposite page: (On décolletage) DIOR Backstage Glow Face Palette in 001 Universal, $82.
This page: (On décolletage) DIOR Rouge Blush Couture Colour Long-wear Powder Blush in 277 Osee, $82.

ZHONG LIN
ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

Diamond in the rough

For Frédéric Malle, perfume has always been part of his family history. Now, with the release of Uncut Gem by Maurice Roucel, the renowned perfumer balances the personal with the phantasmic.

EDITIONS DE PARFUMS BY FRÉDÉRIC MALLE Uncut Gem EDP, 50ml for $355, from Mecca.

VOGUE AUSTRALIA: Uncut Gem is based on the personal cologne of famed perfumer Maurice Roucel, who you convinced to collaborate especially for Editions de Parfums Frédéric Malle. What was it that drew you to it?

FRÉDÉRIC MALLE: "What I liked was that fresh perfumes usually are of one type – especially when you go for naturals. You have notes of lemon and mandarin, usually derived for cologne. But I liked the idea that he added juniper, which was very unusual, and angelica, which made it quirky and quite smart. It was a bit more iris originally. Then I thought we could add this big, mean ambery note, which is very modern, instead of making it pretty. And I think he liked that. What I'm very proud of is that he now alternates from his original to Uncut Gem."

VA: You've said it took several years to convince him to make it. How did you get him over the line in the end?

FM: "We are very good friends, and he has a very good sense of humour and we joke a lot. At the beginning, when I said I would use his perfume, he didn't want to do it. But I was teasing him, saying I wanted people to be as beautiful as he is, and that his sex appeal should not just be a thing for one person, that he had to share. Then what really made him crack was that I said I wasn't interested in taking it exactly as it is, and stealing the formula. I thought what would be interesting would be to build something upon it – maybe add something to the back. I had a few ideas and he liked them. And then we started jamming on it."

VA: Tell us about the Uncut Gem muse.

FM: "When I worked on this one, it was a little bit of Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and the heroes in the movies like *Rebel Without a Cause*. This very sort of classic, rugged guy. Yet, sensitive enough to draw people's attraction, creating mystery and being exciting. It's this person who wears a white T-shirt and a pair of jeans, but is magnetic."

VA: Outside of perfumes, what are your favourite scents?

FM: "It's funny, because I was thinking of something like that this morning. There are many things that many perfumers have tried to do. Like the smell of chimneys when you walk at night, in the mountains. What's exciting is the contrast between the smell of burning and ice-cold air. But when you smell a burnt smell in a lab, it's not so exciting. It's the moment. It's small things: the smell of plastic, some paint, the smell of bitumen in the street, the smell of cut grass, the smell of the Kodak film in the box. But perfume is always part of a context – whether it's the wearer or it's the moment. It's not something that works on its own, it's part of life."

Add to cart: the eyes have it

Whether ever-present or the result of a sleepless night, dark circles can make us look more tired. Here, three new products designed to brighten, soothe and conceal, from start to seamless blended finish.

LESSE AWAKENING EYE CREAM, $90.
Hydrating and brightening, this lightweight cream nourishes and soothes the delicate skin around the eyes, while reducing swelling, dark circles and fine lines.

OLE HENRIKSEN BANANA BRIGHT+ VITAMIN CC STICKS, $48.
For stubborn dark circles, colour correction may be the answer. Ole Henriksen's new sticks use blendable pigments to disguise discolouration. Simply swipe on, blend and follow with a concealer over the top.

SISLEY STYLO CORRECT, $82.
When working with the fine under-eye area, precision is key. Sisley's new double-ended Stylo Correct concealer comes with a fine-tip pen to apply the product, and a foam end to blend.

PHOTOGRAPHS: GORUNWAY.COM. COLLAGE: ARQUETTE COOKE
ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE. DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

CHANEL Les 4 Rouges Yeux Et Joues palette in Caractère, $150, and Mascara Noir Allure in Rouge Grenat, $71.

Paint the town

All over the spring/summer '23 runways, we saw red – the colour, that is – from bold fire-engine hues to deep carmines and soft corals. Now Chanel is ushering in a new season with a collection that celebrates warmth in all its forms. This includes two oversized Les 4 Rouges Yeux Et Joues palettes (which can be applied as a blush, eyeshadow or highlighter), the Baume Essentiel in a rosy flush, an eyeliner, a red mascara (yes, really), lipsticks and nail polishes, the collection is available to shop for a limited time only.

Backstage insider

THE LOOK: Smooth operator
THE LOW-DOWN: Do away with flyaways and frizz. For the ultimate work-to-play look, deploy a straightener (or, better yet, a straightening brush) through the lengths of your hair to tame and smooth, and then finish with a hair oil for a high-gloss shine.

REMINGTON Proluxe Salon Ionic Hair Straightener, $99, from Harvey Norman.

WESTMAN ATELIER Vital Skincare Complexion Drops, $113, from Mecca.

Ace of base

Gucci Westman, of Westman Atelier, knows good skin at all ages. For those with mature skin who are looking to perfect their foundation, Gucci shares her tips and tricks.

LIP TALK: "Oftentimes the definition of your lips diffuses [with age], so I try to create that soft line rather than hard edges. If a more mature woman has thinner lips, then that will obviously look a little harsh, so I try to make it look softer, maybe using my fingers or a foundation brush."

HOLD YOUR COLOUR: "If your skin looks a little red already, you want to first remove the redness where you don't want it, and add it back in where you do want it, like the cheeks. That brightens your complexion and lifts everything."

LIGHT ON: "This [Vital Skincare Complexion Drops, left] is perfect for mature skin. I'm 52, and I feel that women who are older are concerned with things sitting in their lines, and I think radiance is reminiscent of youth, because you want to feel like you're vibrant, you don't want to feel dry or cakey."

Nothing Tastes Like Four Pillars

FOUR PILLARS

FOURPILLARSGIN.COM
#FOURPILLARSGIN

DON'T DRINK MORE, DRINK BETTER.
#DRINKBETTERGIN

DrinkWise.org.au

Tangerine dream

Optimistic and energetic, sunset hues are all aglow in the latest make-up palettes, from warm orange accents to peachy cheeks and apricot eyes.

ART DIRECTION ARQUETTE COOKE **PHOTOGRAPH** ANNA POGOSSOVA

Clockwise from top left: CHANEL Le Vernis Longwear Nail Colour in 967 Watermelon, $43; WESTMAN ATELIER Baby Cheeks Blush Stick in Minette, $80; VYRAO Free 00 EDP, 50ml for $257; ROUGE HERMÈS Satin Lipstick in Orange Boîte, $110; HERMÈS Les Mains Hermès Nail Files, $60 for 12; DIOR Addict Lip Maximizer plumping gloss in 004 Coral, $62; GIVENCHY Prisme Libre Blush in 04 Organza Sienne, $86.

WORDS: KATRINA ISRAEL
ALL PRICES APPROXIMATE DETAILS AT VOGUE.COM.AU/WTB

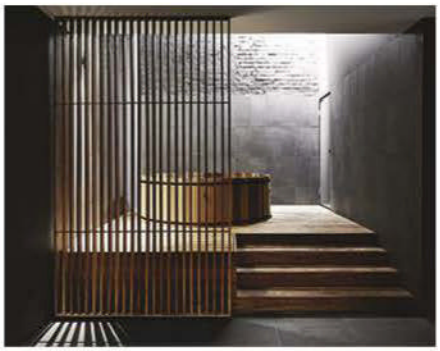
Health havens

When it comes to wellness worship, a new coterie of spa locations have popped up around the country, offering healing and restorative programs that detox and rejuvenate both the mind and body.

Bodhi, Yallingup, Western Australia

Nestled into the heart of Yallingup, a few hours' drive south of Perth in the Margaret River region, gleams Western Australia's newest beauty jewel, Bodhi. The Yallingup location is the sixth and latest opening for the Bodhi spa group in the west. Inside the calming, neutral interiors of Bodhi Yallingup – where skylights illuminate the creams, ecrus and egg shell tones of the tiles, walls and carpets, and plush velvet furnishings serve as pops of colour – specialists focus on holistic, nurturing treatments.

In addition to the six treatment rooms, the day spa also boasts separate spa, sauna, powder and lounge rooms, all designed with harmony in mind. While the menu offers its fair share of beauty classics in massages and facials (including a product partnership with New Zealand beauty darling Emma Lewisham) options in the wellness space – saunas, spas and light therapies – round out an offering as comprehensive as it is restorative. If you have time, book for a session in the spa and sauna, and follow with the Tension-Release massage and Brightening Facial. The contrast of hot and cold, as well as the intense massage and soothing facial, delivers a whole new world of relaxation. *Go to bodhispa.com. Mahalia Chang*



Comma, Melbourne, Victoria

On arrival at Comma (fittingly, for Melbourne, it's tucked down a laneway), a light-drenched minimalist reception area is the first sign of the respite to be had within the southern version of Comma's original Byron bathhouse. Designed to facilitate a mental and physical reset – "comma" denoting a pause – the bathhouse doesn't allow phones, and though it carries over the same emphasis on rituals and clean design from its northern sister locale, it has a distinctly Melbournian bent.

Moody grey-tiled walls inside the bathhouse are punctuated by a shaft of natural light illuminating the massive 18,000-litre Scandi-style cedar hot tub that looks fit for a viking. Infused with magnesium, a 20-minute soak melts away muscle tension, any remnants of which are finished off by either of the two saunas on offer in the bathhouse, or a suite of massage treatments which can be added to any visit. The Finnish version of the former, which gets heated to an intense 80 degrees Celsius, is spacious and traditional, while the infrared, heated on our visit to a more polite 63 degrees, is a less sweat-inducing option, working on a cellular level and evoking the feel of soaking up sun.

All is broken up by water; toggle between the tub, shower, or traditional Japanese bathing stool and bucket, the kind made from hinoki wood and used in onsen. Guests are encouraged to embrace the ritual of washing away impurities this way. Ice-cold probiotic water is on standby, while Japanese indigo linen robes add to the tactile immersion, details founder Susie McIntosh picked up while on a trip to Japan with architect and friend Eloise Fotheringham in 2019.

Signing off with a brisk dunk from a pail of pre-chilled water makes for a comprehensive soaking but, rather than an unwelcome shock, leaves you with the sensation of being alert but serene. *Go to commaspaces.com. Alice Birrell*

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MAIN IMAGE: DAN MARTENSEN
OTHER IMAGES: TESS KELLY, ANGE WALL

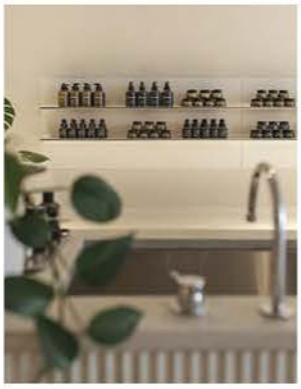
Alba Thermal Springs & Spa, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

Things are heating up in the Mornington Peninsula with the opening of the wellness destination Alba Thermal Springs & Spa. Nestled among 15 hectares of native landscape are 32 unique pools, ranging from warm geothermal to cool plunge pools, restorative salt baths and herbal-infused botanical pools.

For optimal rejuvenation, take a cool dip in The Hemisphere plunge pool before warming up in the nearby dry sauna, followed by your choice of geothermal pool, rounded off with a nourishing steam. Night owls can also book an evening session. Here, head for the sunset pool, The Eve, for stargazing.

Inside, the spa hosts 21 treatment rooms and an extensive therapy line-up that includes restorative facials, Vichy showers and a signature 2.5 hour Hamman Float treatment, which combines a steam exfoliation, body mask and massage with bath access.

To top it all, enjoy a light meal at acclaimed chef Karen Martini's onsite Thyme restaurant, a local favourite. Designed for grazing after an indulgent spa day, the menu harnesses local produce to create fresh Japanese-inspired dishes with Mediterranean undertones. And yes, you can dine in your Alba robe and slippers. *Go to albathermalsprings.com.au. Imogen Frost*



Adytum, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

A holistic wellness centre in the middle of the nation's capital might not sound groundbreaking, but despite all Canberra's progress in the worlds of food, wine and culture, it has long been missing a great spa. Happily, the arrival of Adytum has changed that. Featuring a vegan elixir bar, yoga lounge and bathhouse, the calm and considered space is a sanctuary for the overworked and stressed out, offering a range of wellness services from relaxation massages and facials to acupuncture and even astrology sessions. Signature oils and custom products are at the heart of the massages, wraps and facials, with Adytum's own blends complementing every treatment.

The Japanese-inspired bathhouse is a highlight. Inside, you'll find a traditional hot-rock sauna, Japanese oak mineral bath and a cold-pail shower.

Pattern Studio has designed the spa with a focus on natural stones channelling Hellenic ruins, soft lighting and recycled, environmentally conscious materials. The result is one of serenity and calmness: "We believe that wellness is far more than being free from illness, " says owner Renée Douros. "It's a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing." *Go to adytum.com.au. Francesca Wallace*

Aurora Spa & Bathhouse, Sorrento, Vic

It's not a stretch to claim Aurora Spa & Bathhouse has turned relaxation into an art form. Located at The Continental Sorrento in Victoria, the spa is 1,000 square metres of hedonistic heaven, complete with every thermal bathing ritual a wellness warrior could want.

Aside from the striking aesthetics of Aurora (it was designed by acclaimed architecture firm Woods Bagot), the focus on blissful, exhilarating thermal treatments is what really sets this apart from your standard spa.

There are scented hot and cold therapy showers, a glacial mist room, steam room, huge Nordic wooden sauna as well as four hydrotherapy pools. Once you've experienced these, try out the float pool, halotherapy (Himalayan salt) room, or indulge in a massage or facial within the luxe confines of one of the eight private treatment suites.

To maximise the benefits of its hot and cold therapies, the spa recommends following its signature bathing circuit; a step-by-step guide to experiencing each therapy in the most effective sequence. The 90-minute bathhouse experience is beautiful as a standalone treatment, but for maximum relaxation, add on a Biologique Recherche body treatment or Bio-Lift facial.

And if the above treatments still aren't enough to move the wellness needle, consider booking a three-day retreat. While itineraries are customisable, you can expect beauty and wellness treatments, yoga, nourishing meals, and a very plush place to sleep. *Go to auroraspa.com.au. Elle Halliwell*

ALAN JENSEN, CHRIS McCONVILLE, NIKOLE RAMSAY, LEAN TIMMS.

The Whitening Clinic, Sydney, New South Wales

Skin confidence is one thing, but confidence in your smile is another transformation entirely. And outside of costly cosmetic dentistry, the fastest way to achieve a smile makeover is through teeth whitening. The main barrier? Fear of sensitivity. But for anyone who has struggled with the shooting pain of teeth whitening – be it at-home kits where the peroxide escapes onto your gums, or the strength of peroxide administered in the dentist chair that can penetrate the enamel and cause nerve sensitivity – salvation is here in the form of a breezy spa-like sanctuary in Sydney's eastern suburbs that specialises in pain-free teeth whitening.

Prior to opening the brick and mortar clinic, owner Alissa Brandtman had a healthy business as a mobile whitening specialist, which she has parlayed into this salon-inspired location that delivers pearly whites without aggravating sensitivities, to which we can attest.

For the treatment process, gums are first protected with a hardening gel (which can be easily flicked off afterwards), before a six per cent hydrogen peroxide gel is applied using a twist pen. Next, a cool blue LED light activates the peroxide during three 25-minute intervals, while you zone out on the reclining lounges listening to your favourite podcast.

Thanks to the lower level of peroxide used on teeth and the 1.5-hour treatment time, the majority of clients get little to no sensitivity post treatment, though first-timers are recommended two 1.5-hour treatments within two to four weeks for optimal results. *Go to thewhiteningclinic.net.au. Katrina Israel*

Chuan Spa, Gold Coast, Queensland

Opening last year, The Langham, Gold Coast made an immediate mark on the hotel landscape; it's dramatic architecture dazzling as brightly as the golden sands of its oceanfront location, its interiors the pinnacle of luxury. Naturally, then, the resort's new holistic wellness concept, Chuan Spa, lives up to its five-star setting, merging serenity, heavenly scents and soothing sounds with understated glamour. Beyond the sleek waiting area, where guests can peruse salon products as if browsing the beauty floor of a fancy department store, are eight elegant treatment rooms, each with ensuites, two reserved for couples.

But what makes Chuan particularly special is that all its lavish treatments – facials, massages, scrubs and wraps, hand and foot therapies plus beauty services – are guided by the principles of traditional Chinese medicine, a first for a high-end spa on the Gold Coast.

Therapists, whose healing hands cast a rejuvenating spell on tight and tangled muscles, work with acupressure points, while regimens draw on the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Whichever element is dominant in an individual (as determined by an introductory questionnaire) influences the scents experienced and herbs used.

Post treatment, blissed out guests can relax in a "dream pod", detox in the sauna or immerse themselves in the diamond-shaped indoor pool. Whatever the first-class pampering, visitors to this sanctuary on the Goldie will leave with their *qi* far more in balance than when they arrived. *Go to langhamhotels.com. Cushla Chauhan*

Osborn House Spa, Bundanoon, NSW

Nestled inconspicuously within the tiny historic town of Bundanoon in the Southern Highlands is Osborn House, arguably one of the country's best new boutique hotels.

Accommodation aside, it's the anticipation of a weekend – or if you're lucky, longer – of pampering within its luxe confines that draws many salvation seekers to the property.

The 22-room guest house's spa is a destination in itself. On entry, its velvet chairs, soft, natural light and calming mint walls are a panacea to life's chaos.

Like the hotel, there's nothing generic about this spa experience. Want to scrub away that city grime? Book the Spiritually Soaked; 90 minutes of being scrubbed, rubbed and cocooned in a skin-softening mud wrap. As its name implies, the OMG – an hour of acupressure massage with an optional facial add-on – is also worth a go.

When it comes to facials, it can be frustrating when you want the anti-ageing effects of one treatment, but also the blissful benefits of another. The Osborn spa team has fortunately removed this dilemma of choice; offering three treatment options, which can be tailored specifically to your skin needs. Also worth noting are the products by Australian skincare company LaGaia Unedited, which are especially gentle on sensitive skin and contain potent vitamins and botanical extracts.

While it's tempting to want to jump straight onto the treatment table the moment you arrive at Osborn House, our advice is to first take a wander through the gardens, breathe in the country air, and spend at least an hour getting steamed and soaked in the hotel's sauna, steam room and stunning indoor pool. *Go to osbornhouse.com.au. Elle Halliwell*

Life choices

Best-selling author Ruby Warrington spent much of her adult life searching for her missing maternal instinct. After digging deep into her own complicated family history, her new book hopes to normalise not having children – whatever the reason may be.

I spent most of my 20s and 30s waiting to want to be a mum. I waited until I was 23, staring at a pale blue line on a pregnancy test and knowing without question that I would have an abortion. I waited until my wedding night, passed out blind drunk on a bed strewn with rose petals at age 27. I waited until I turned 30 (come on, *now*, surely). I was 39 when my adorable nephew was born; my womb remained unmoved. But I only gave up searching for my missing maternal instinct in my early 40s, when I began to contemplate how my experience of menopause would be. At which point it dawned on me that I had absolutely zero regrets about not having had kids.

Which just wasn't *normal*, was it? Not only are women supposedly biologically hardwired to want to procreate, but children assigned female at birth are also socialised to aspire to motherhood from the age we are old enough to talk. Did the fact I had never been consumed by the mythical "baby fever" mean there was something wrong with me? Working as a magazine journalist in the early 2000s, I'd been asked by multiple editors to write about my "unorthodox" choice. They all wanted to know: "But WHY don't you want kids?" For me, one answer had always been enough: "I just don't." But the more other people questioned it, the more what had felt like a simple inner knowing became clouded by self-doubt. Doubt that I would ever "grow up" or be taken seriously if I didn't have kids; doubt in my capacity to give and receive unconditional love; doubt that I wouldn't live to regret it.

The signs that parenthood was not for me had been there early on. My first memory of an actual conversation with my mother is me asking her, aged four or five years old, why people were so obsessed with babies. It was a genuine question. Compared to baby animals, which were beyond cute, *human* babies were ugly, wrinkled, overgrown worms, their eyes encrusted with gunk, gummy pink mouths leaking drool. And then there was the dreadful wailing. The constant aura of poop. As she remembers it, I went on to tell her: "If I ever have a baby, I'll give it to you to look after."

Meanwhile, on the annual trip with Dad to Toys R Us, I would walk dispassionately past the aisle with the Tiny Tears dolls, with their flat, staring eyes that "cried" real tears when you fed them water from a bottle. More advanced models also wet their diapers. I was baffled. Playing "mum" was supposed to be *fun*? I preferred my toy post office, with its rubber stamps, fake money, and stash of little envelopes. But I became aware

that my childhood aversion to babies was something I would be expected to grow out of. Women and babies went together like hot milk and honey; being somebody's mother was somewhere in my future.

And so, the seeds of my mission to find my missing maternal instinct were sown. To the extent that, by around age 35, I was willing to (sort of) convince myself that having kids would at least be an adventure. An unbeatable once-in-a-lifetime experience! But whenever I pictured it, the feeling was the same as when I was planning a big trip: nervous anticipation. Would I make all my connections okay?

"Nobody ever feels ready," people assured me. But it wasn't enough to override visions in which my kids' incessant neediness made me feel tormented, I went slowly insane from the lack of privacy, and my marriage buckled under the financial pressure of raising them. Not once did my husband decide to "try" to get pregnant.

For some of my friends, contemplating the end of our reproductive years pressed a panic button in their wombs, and I found myself rooting for them as they became entangled with what can seem to outsiders like the industrial birthing complex known as IVF. But for me, the ebbing away of other people's expectations about what I should be doing with my uterus brought a sense of relief. And it was also, as I neared and cleared the hump of 40, that something interesting happened. For so long, it had felt like I was the "only one" who didn't want kids. Now, I was meeting more and more women who either felt the same as me, or for whom it just hadn't happened. Far from an outlier, it turned out I was part of what I was coming to see as a previously unsung sisterhood of women without kids.

It was when I mapped this observation against the global reproductive slowdown that some experts predict will see the population halve in 23 countries by 2100, that I realised I had landed on the topic for my new book, also titled *Women Without Kids*. It still might not be the norm, but it was clearly time to normalise not having children – whatever any individual woman's reasons for this. And it was in the writing process that I finally uncovered my own deepest "whys" for never having aspired to motherhood.

I'd always been aware that not becoming a parent would mean something was ending with me. But it wasn't until I put pen to paper that this was revealed as the legacy of my dysfunctional family. My parents had always been loving, which made it harder to see, but their estrangement from *their* families of origin meant I'd never felt like part of a wider, supportive clan. If anything, my experience of "family" had been alienating and fraught with wounded feelings; as such, it was not something I had ever felt called to replicate. Even more telling, there had also been my mother's brave confession when I was 37: after I'd been born, for reasons I detail in my book, she had struggled to feel a connection to me. At the time, this had helped to explain the elusive emotional distance that had always existed between us. Writing it down helped me further join the dots: how can our experience of being mothered not impact our feelings about becoming mothers ourselves?

Most challenging of all to acknowledge has been the influence of my half-brother, who was born with severe disabilities. My father's child with his second wife, I was 20 when he was born, and well on my way to the autonomous adult existence I'd dreamed of since I was a kid. As such, I'd watched from a cautious distance as his parents' lives had slowly and steadily come to revolve around his caregiving – to the extent that they remain his full-time carers in their late 60s and 70s respectively. It was only relatively recently that his condition was confirmed not to be hereditary, and while I cannot parse the extent to which him being part of our family influenced my feelings on the subject, it has absolutely factored into my assessment of my "parental readiness" – that is, my capacity for the vocation of parenthood. We tend to romanticise caring for children with disabilities, but until you've seen firsthand what the role actually entails, it is impossible to fathom the challenges and the trauma that can come with this.

> "I feel a profound sense of gratitude to have come of age at a time when I am able to make a realistic assessment of my desire and aptitude for parenthood, and to make the choice that is right for me. A choice that my foremothers did not have access to"

None of which has been particularly easy to stomach. I've been forced to confront the envy I often feel towards people with "normal" family backgrounds; the stab of resentment when they talk of cosy get-togethers with grandparents and cousins. Within this, I've found myself grieving the lack of these relationships in my life. In terms of my half-brother, I've had to grapple with what my unwillingness to risk becoming a parent to a disabled child says about my character, and whether this makes me a "bad person". But overriding it all, I feel a profound sense of gratitude to have come of age at a time when I am able to make a realistic assessment of my desire and aptitude for parenthood, and to make the choice that is right for me. A choice that my foremothers did not have access to – and which is currently under threat for millions of women in the United States, with the overturning of Roe v. Wade.

Which is not to say the pinpricks of doubt don't still come and go, needling me with fears of growing old and increasingly infirm with only my cat for company. But these are quickly offset by yet more gratitude for my freedom, my friendships, my financial stability, and the peaceful sanctuary of my marriage. For the long, quiet hours of solitude that I have identified as actually being vital to my wellbeing. In many ways, I was born to be a woman without kids. Digging deeper into my history – and into all the factors that have shaped our unsung sisterhood – has helped me see that there is nothing wrong with me, while reminding me that by no means am I the only one.

Ruby Warrington is the best-selling author of Sober Curious. *Her new book* Women Without Kids: The Revolutionary Rise of an Unsung Sisterhood *(Orion Spring, $32.99), is available May 9.*

BJARNE X TAKATA / TRUNK ARCHIVE

Clockwise from top left: Nathan Angelis, Jonah Waterhouse, James Majoos, Jordan Gogos and Steph Liakos.

From left: Jack Stratton-Smith, Milo Hartill, Gabriella Power and Christian Wilkins.

Manahou Mackay.

Nicolas Parkhill, CEO of ACON.

From left: Kathleen Ebbs, Sandy McIntyre and Ella Lawry.

Brandon Kilgour (left) with Jordan Turner. **Below:** The graffiti wall, by Jordan Gogos and Steph Liakos.

Sean Brady.

Starley.

Dylan Quirk (left) and Jack Vidgen.

From left: Seann Miley Moore, Etcetera Etcetera and Brendan De La Hay.

Christian Wilkins.

Clara Fable (left) and Newsha Syeh.

Writ large

The colour, excitement and packed festivities of Sydney WorldPride made the tail end of summer even more glorious this year. Adding to the joy, *Vogue*, *GQ* and Jean Paul Gaultier united for an exclusive event at Sydney's Beta Bar, celebrating the French designer's ongoing support for the community and the brand's modus operandi, 'Get Used To It'. The label announced a donation of $20 from each purchase of their limited-edition Pride fragrances to ACON, the Sydney health organisation responding to issues affecting LGBTQIA+ people. Guests, including Manahou Mackay, James Majoos and Christian Wilkins, dressed to impress and throughout the event wrote messages of affirmation on a graffiti wall designed by creative Jordan Gogos and designer Steph Liakos.

WORDS: JONAH WATERHOUSE
PHOTOGRAPHS: MYLES KALUS FOR SONNY VANDEVELDE

From left: Akon Changkou, Alastair McKimm, Carin Backoff, Stef Mitchell and Christine Centenera.

Emma Thynn, Marchioness of Bath.

Enninful, Centenera and Anna Wintour.

Gabriella Karefa-Johnson, Christopher Kane and Eva Chen.

From left: Adwoa Aboah, Haider Ackermann, Centenera and Justin Padgett.

Centenera and Erica Packer.

Camille Charriere and Arnaud Vaillant.

Veronika Heilbrunner and Justin O'Shea with their son Walter.

Derek Blasberg, Centenera and Alicia Vikander.

From left: Catherine McNeil, Dion Lee, Centenera and Kym Ellery.

SONNY VANDEVELDE

Party in Paris

It was a who's who of the fashion world inside the famous Psyché Room at The Ritz Paris where guests gathered to celebrate Christine Centenera's recent appointment as editor-in-chief of *Vogue* Australia. Hosted by Edward Enninful, editor-in-chief of *Vogue* UK, guests included a host of industry insiders and celebrities, among them, Condé Nast global chief content officer, Anna Wintour, Mario Sorrenti, Adwoa Aboah, Alicia Vikander, Derek Blasberg and Eva Chen. A bevy of homegrown talent also lent their support on the night, with Dion Lee, Erica Packer and Catherine McNeil in attendance. Belvedere Vodka martinis were served, with everyone kicking back in elegant style on the penultimate evening of ready-to-wear fashion month in Paris.

Aries
21 March-20 April

Vital things you don't yet know will start emerging soon. An eclipse in your own sign is a game changer in a month when Mercury retrograde messes with your money and values, and a Full Moon may seal or sever a partnership. Despite confusion, Jupiter also in your sign may bring unexpected luck as it meets the Sun, so if or when you see a chance this month, take it.
STYLE ICON: Rooney Mara

Taurus
21 April-21 May

It's all about you now with the Sun in your sign, though with Mercury retrograde also in your sign you might be wondering exactly who you are. Eclipse action helps to focus your thoughts and as lucky Jupiter brings innovative ideas, asteroid Vesta suggests planting seeds to set your dreams on their way. Take your time, as your ruler Venus will help to manifest money.
STYLE ICON: Gigi Hadid

Gemini
22 May-21 June

You're blessed with Venus in your sign now, to make you feel good and attract fine things and people your way. Even so, your mind may feel scrambled while your ruler Mercury is retrograde, and an eclipse could trigger factors that affect ambitions and friendships. As the Full Moon makes a romantic scenario over-emotional, your cosmic quest now is how to find balance.
STYLE ICON: Riley Keough

Cancer
22 June-22 July

Your go-to crew and hopes and dreams are big factors this month, though with Mercury flipping into retrograde a reassessment of each area may be required. Love is on your mind thanks to Venus firing up your imagination, and while home may feel emotional thanks to the Full Moon, work has an air of the unexpected via a solar eclipse, and a hint of luck care of Jupiter.
STYLE ICON: Ariana Grande

Leo
23 July-23 August

Your career sparkles this month with your ruler the Sun amping up your work role. Even so, a rethink could be on the cards under Mercury retrograde's influence, and you may be tempted to take a risky dive into unknown territory thanks to a potent eclipse and a hint of Jupiter-inspired luck. Love and money link to friends and ambitions now, so dreams could be made real.
STYLE ICON: Dua Lipa

Virgo
24 August-22 September

Venus lands in your career zone now and with the cosmos highlighting adventure, opportunities may arise to expand your knowledge and experience though you may need to take a step back before moving forwards while your ruler Mercury turns retrograde. As a Full Moon urges care with cash, an eclipse and Jupiter hint at out-of-the-blue luck with commitments and intimacy.
STYLE ICON: Beyoncé

Libra
23 September-23 October

Life goes low-key this month with Mercury retrograde refining financial and intimate obligations. A Full Moon in your own sign hints at re-evaluating what and who should go or stay in your life, and as lucky Jupiter and eclipse action also suggest a potential shift in partnership dynamics, your ruler Venus highlights broadening your romantic and adventurous horizons.
STYLE ICON: Cardi B

Scorpio
24 October-22 November

Relationships may be perplexing now with Mercury retrograde on the loose. Even so, Venus makes communication the key to improving professional and personal partnerships. A Full Moon hints at emotional burnout but with an eclipse and lucky Jupiter influencing your health and work routines, something unexpected could work out in your favour in the long run.
STYLE ICON: Alexa Chung

Sagittarius
23 November-21 December

It's time to concentrate on your health, and with Mercury retrograde influencing your wellbeing and work routines you might want to reconsider both areas now. Venus brings love and harmony to partnerships, and something you didn't see coming could turn out beautifully thanks to a New Moon eclipse and your ruler, lucky Jupiter, in your romance and creativity zone.
STYLE ICON: Nicki Minaj

Capricorn
22 December-20 January

What you do for pleasure and how you approach romance are up for renegotiation this month under Mercury retrograde's influence. Looking after yourself better is a priority too, with Venus in your wellbeing zone. As a Full Moon puts your career on the back burner, a New Moon eclipse and Jupiter bring a sense of freedom, joy and luck to all things linked to *chez vous*.
STYLE ICON: Mary J Blige

Aquarius
21 January-18 February

Home gets a cosmic boost from the Sun and your ruler Uranus this month. You might want to rejig your lifestyle when Mercury flips into reverse, and love could be a factor with Venus in your romance zone. It's a more insular time for you so what's local may hold more appeal and more options, with a New Moon eclipse and Jupiter bringing surprisingly lucky opportunities.
STYLE ICON: Amal Clooney

Pisces
19 February-20 March

A recent unfiltered phase could lead to a rethink of your communication style now that Mercury is in reverse. TMI and oversharing could backfire so the cosmos is urging you to recognise when to speak up and when to zip it. Money luck is likely with a New Moon eclipse and Jupiter activating hidden resources, and home life looks loved up with adorable Venus in the house.
STYLE ICON: Camila Cabello

ASTROLOGER: STELLA NOVA

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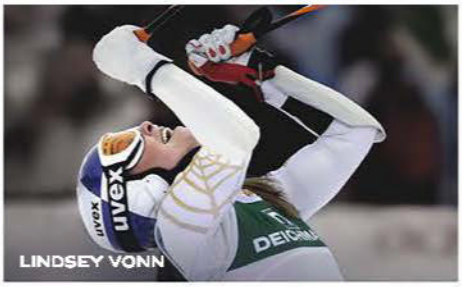

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